6/3

Library of the Theological Seminary,

PRINCETON, N. J.

Green Fund

Feb. 13 1879.

BV 4253 .Y64 1854
Young, George Paxton, 1819-1889.
Miscellaneous discourses and expositions of scripture

Shelf.....

MISCELLANEOUS DISCOURSES

AND

EXPOSITIONS OF SCRIPTURE.

BY

GEORGE PAXTON YOUNG, A.M.,

ONE OF THE PROFESSORS OF THEOLOGY IN KNOX'S COLLEGE, TORONTO, CANADA WEST.

EDINBURGH:

JOHNSTONE AND HUNTER.

HAMILTON, CANADA WEST: D. M'LELLAN.

M.DCCC.LIV.

EDINBURGH:
PRINTED BY JOHNSTONE AND HUNTER,
HIGH STREET.

PREFACE.

THE Author of the following Discourses having been removed, in the month of July last, from his pastoral charge at Hamilton, C. W., to a Theological Chair in Knox's College, Toronto, was urgently requested to publish the sermon which he preached to his people on the occasion of leaving them. With this request he did not feel disposed to comply: but on consideration he resolved, for various reasons, to commit to press a *volume* of Sermons and Expositions of Scripture of a miscellaneous description; which he now accordingly lays before the public. His farewell sermon to his congregation at Hamilton is included in the volume, under the title, "The Gospel Judged to be Wisdom by them who are Perfect." The Discourses, as now published, are not materially different from what they were when originally preached in the ordinary course of Sabbath ministration.

TORONTO, 2*d January* 1854.

CONTENTS.

PAGE

I. THE PEACEMAKER, ... 9

"Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God."
—MATT. v. 9.

II. THE LOVE OF THE BRETHREN, ... 25

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."—1 JOHN iii. 14.

III. EVERY THING BEAUTIFUL IN HIS TIME, . . 47

"He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart: so that no man can find out the work that God maketh, from the beginning to the end."—ECCL. iii. 11.

IV. TWO SIDES OF A QUESTION; OR, RIGHTEOUS OVERMUCH, AND OVERMUCH WICKED, . . 61

"All things have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness. Be not righteous over-much; neither make thyself over-wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself? Be not over-much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time? It is good that thou shouldest take hold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all."—ECCL. vii. 15-18.

V. THE TRAITOR UNMASKED; OR, INCIDENTS OF OUR LORD'S LAST PASSOVER, ... 76

"When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, That one of you shall betray me," &c.—JOHN xiii. 21-38.

PAGE

VI. THE MORNING OF THE FIRST CHRISTIAN SABBATH; OR, INCIDENTS OF OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION, ... 99

"The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre," &c.—John xx. 1-18.

VII. THE MIRROR, ... 115

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."—2 Cor. iii. 18.

VIII. DEATH SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY, . . . 136

"So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."—1 Cor. xv. 54.

IX. THE SANCTIFIER AND THE SANCTIFIED ALL OF ONE, ... 151

"For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one."—Heb. ii. 11.

X. THE FOUNDATION OF GOD STANDING SURE; OR, THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS, . . 171

"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."—2 Tim. ii. 19.

XI. THE INTERCESSION OF THE SPIRIT, . . . 195

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."—Rom. viii. 26, 27.

XII. THE FEAR OF THE LORD: A Sermon preached to Children, ... 217

"Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord."—Ps. xxxiv. 11.

PAGE

XIII. SERVANTS AND MASTERS, ... 230

"Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ: not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him."—Eph. vi. 5-9.

XIV. BELIEVERS GLORYING IN TRIBULATION, . . 252

"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope."—Rom. v. 3, 4.

XV. GOLD, SILVER, PRECIOUS STONES, AND WOOD, HAY, STUBBLE, ... 263

"Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."—1 Cor. iii. 12-15.

XVI. THE GOSPEL JUDGED TO BE WISDOM BY THEM THAT ARE PERFECT, ... 281

"Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect."—1 Cor. ii. 6.

XVII. GLORY AND DOMINION ASCRIBED TO CHRIST, 301

"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."—Rev. i. 5, 6.

XVIII. A RUNNING EXPOSITION OF THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK, ... 321

PROPERTY OF
PRINCETON
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY

MISCELLANEOUS DISCOURSES,

ETC.

I.

THE PEACEMAKER.

"Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God."
—MATT. v. 9.

WHAT a happy world this would be, if peace universally prevailed among its inhabitants!—if no battle-field ever presented its ghastly spectacles of blood and death!—if no quarrels ever disturbed our streets!—if no jealousies and antipathies ever existed among neighbours!—if in no home, of all the millions of the homes of men, feuds or alienations were ever known!—if scenes of acrimonious dispute never occurred between husbands and wives!—if brothers and sisters were never at mutual variance!—if the hearts of the fathers were never turned from their children, nor the hearts of children from their fathers!—if no hand were ever raised to smite!—if the scowl of hate were never witnessed upon a human countenance, the language of angry passion never heard from a human tongue, the thought of malignity or revenge never harboured in a human breast!

Shall such a state of things ever be realised? and if so, by what means? To the former inquiry we answer—yes; to the latter—by the diffusion of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Men who have no faith in the Word of God count this an Utopian dream. Their philosophy recognises no cause adequate to the production of so mighty an effect. They can understand how the advance of civilization, and the increase of knowledge among all classes of persons, may improve human character, so as ultimately to abolish such enormities as formal wars between nations, and also greatly to lessen the contention that prevails in private life. But beyond this they are unable to go. A time when all forms and degrees of discord shall be unknown, cannot, in their estimation, be soberly expected. But the Christian feels warranted to judge differently. When he represents to himself a state of things in which peace is universally prevalent, this is not to him a mere picture of the imagination; but he believes that the vision shall be fully and literally realised. The infallible Word of God has told him so, and has pointed out the instrumentality through which the result shall be accomplished. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones also shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; *for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.*"

An era of universal peace, therefore, consequent upon the diffusion of the knowledge of the Lord, shall yet bless our earth; and he is the peacemaker who uses his endea-

vours to hasten that era by spreading abroad the knowledge of the Lord within the sphere of his influence. Suppose that a person should spend his days in labouring to compose quarrels among his fellow-men, without, however, doing any thing to bring the parties whom he found in a state of animosity under the influence of Gospel principles, he would deserve the character of a peacemaker only in a very limited and inferior degree. He might meet with apparent success in various instances; yet, leaving unchanged the hearts of those who were the objects of his persuasions, he would contribute nothing real or permanent to the cause of peace. The sources of discord must be reached, in order to its prevalence among men being materially affected; and this can only be done by the Gospel. We, therefore, restrict the name of peacemaker to him whose influence is directed towards the advancement of the Gospel. Peacemaker and evangelist are one.

In adopting this view we put no strained interpretation upon the text. On the contrary, we conceive that we are bringing out its exact idea. The position which the beatitude under consideration has, in the series to which it belongs, favours this opinion. The immediate object of the beatitudes, with which our Lord commenced his sermon on the mount, was to bring out the distinctive marks of the members of his kingdom,—first, their internal characters; and next, their external relations. A regular progress may be observed in the internal features mentioned, —*poverty of spirit*, the germ of all vital godliness,—*mourning*, or godly sorrow on account of sin,—*meekness*, that readiness to bear injuries without complaint or retaliation, which follows upon a sense of our guilt in the sight of God; a disposition beautifully exemplified in the case of David, when he said regarding Shimei, "So let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David," —*a hungering and thirsting after righteousness*, an earnest

longing, that is, for the holiness without which a spiritually enlightened man feels that happiness is impossible,—*mercy*, because those who have themselves been the objects of the divine compassion must feel compassion for their fellow-men; and, finally, *purity of heart*. This is the consummation. Christian character, internally considered, begins with poverty of spirit, and is perfected in purity of heart. Why, then, does our Lord, before proceeding to notice the external relations of the members of his kingdom ("Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake," and so on), interpose the beatitude of our text, "Blessed are the peacemakers"? What propriety is there in describing his people by their disposition to promote peace, after Christian character has been already fully developed, and its maturity indicated in the beatitude relating to purity of heart? The answer is, that peacemaking does not rank in the same class with poverty of spirit, godly sorrow for sin, meekness, and the other component elements of Christian character; but it rather assumes that an individual's Christian character has been formed, and it supposes him then to go forth and endeavour to leaven the world with those high and holy principles which have been implanted in his own soul, and the communication of which to others is the best way—in fact, the only true way—to promote peace and goodwill among men. Though purity of heart is the completeness of Christian characters, yet peacemaking is properly placed after it, because it is just in so far as we have become pure in heart that we can do the work of peacemakers,—the work of filling the earth with the influence of the Gospel,—the work of bringing men to live in harmony, by bringing them to receive that divine truth which, were it universally received, would utterly banish variance and contention from human society.

In order to the further elucidation of the subject, we

shall *first* make some remarks illustrative of the fact that the discord, which is so extensively prevalent, results from the sinful passions reigning in the hearts of men; *then* show that nothing but the Gospel of the grace of God is adequate to subdue men's sinful propensities; from which, *in fine*, our conclusion will be obvious, that the peacemaker is he who uses his endeavours to promote the spread of the Gospel.

I. In the first place, *discord is the offspring of sin.* It is because the world is full of sin that it is full of discord. The various lusts of the human heart are the fires that keep the caldron of contention boiling and bubbling up.

The wars, for instance, which have, in various ages, desolated the globe, and which exhibit strife in its most gigantic proportions, are mostly traceable to the sinful principle of *ambition.* An Alexander, a Cæsar, or a Bonaparte, is fired with the desire of displaying his military genius, of extending the limits of his empire, or acquiring renown as a conqueror. To gratify this passion wars are undertaken, —the wealth of kingdoms is expended, and their commerce ruined,—the fruits of the earth are destroyed, and cities reduced to ashes,—myriads upon myriads of human beings, in the noontide of their days, full of life and hope, are swept off to a sudden grave,—widows and orphans innumerable are thrown into lamentation,—and the direst miseries overflow, like a flood, scenes where order and prosperity were accustomed to prevail. Nor is the influence of ambition seen merely in the contests of nations. We every day perceive it working discord between private individuals also. How common is it for the disappointment suffered by an unsuccessful candidate for some trivial post of authority or distinction, to rankle for years in his mind, alienating him from all who have been in any way concerned in his defeat, or who have not been sufficiently

active in promoting his elevation! *Covetousness* is another pregnant source of contention. No one needs to be told what an amount of unfriendly feeling, and how many acrimonious controversies, originate in the excessive love of money. In his haste to be rich, an individual commits a fraud upon his neighbour, takes some indirect means of injuring his business, or otherwise acts in a mean and unworthy manner towards him. What is the consequence? The injured party resents the wrong he has suffered. Then come mutual recriminations and abuse; and the quarrel, thus commenced, may be carried to any length. Even the nearest relatives are at times alienated from one another by "the mammon of unrighteousness." Look again at *pride*. I form an estimate of myself, which is in all likelihood greatly exaggerated, and I expect others to treat me according to this estimate. In this, however, I am disappointed. I do not receive the honour which I think to be my due. I fancy that I have been slighted, or that sufficient deference has not been shown me. Hereupon I take offence. I quarrel with the parties whom I consider to have been disrespectful. The footing of goodwill on which I previously stood with them is broken; and they are henceforth my enemies. Once more, what streams of contention flow from the poisoned fountain of *sensuality!* The haunts of intemperance are the very temples of discord. You expect brawls among a company of men who are debasing themselves by drinking to excess. "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine." Drunkenness entering into a house is of itself sufficient, were there no other causes of variance at work, to make that home, however loving and united previously, a perfect pandemonium of strife. And need I do more than refer to the kindred sin of licentious-

ness? Estranged affections, desolated hearths, torn and bleeding families, cruel and inextinguishable feuds, violent and untimely deaths, are its natural fruits.

Such examples might be multiplied indefinitely; but enough has been said to confirm the assertion, that discord is the offspring of sin. The truth is clearly expressed by the apostle James, when he says, "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?"

If this, however, be the case,—if wars and fightings arise from our lusts,—the reign of peace can be effectually established upon the earth only in proportion as these lusts are extinguished. In so far as men are enabled to put away pride, and to be clothed with humility,—in so far as worldly-mindedness and grasping avarice are disenchanted from the breast,—in so far as intemperance gives place to sobriety, and licentiousness to purity,—in so far as the envious are brought to rejoice in the good of their neighbours, and the selfish to look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others,—in so far as restless ambition, and an insatiable desire for earthly honour as an ultimate object, die out of the world,—thus far, and no farther, will human society cease to be distracted with contention.

II. This leads us to our second position, that *the Gospel of the grace of God is alone adequate to subdue men's sinful propensities.*

Most of the causes which those who put no faith in the Gospel look to, as having a chief efficacy in ameliorating human society, were in operation in various parts of the heathen world for ages before the coming of Christ; and what did they effect in the way of practical morality? Absolutely nothing. The character of the heathen, drawn by the apostle Paul, is as follows:—"God gave them over to

a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." A very dark picture! And yet it is borne out, in its every line, by history. The description, too, it must be observed, was intended by the sacred writer to apply to nations which had reached, in many respects, a high stage of civilization. There can be no doubt that Paul had principally in view the polished Greeks and Romans,—whose poets and historians are to this day looked upon as models of literary taste,—whose speculative philosophers had prosecuted inquiry, in the different departments of intellectual science, to a point of advancement which has scarcely yet been passed,—and whose moralists had produced treatises on questions of duty, not much inferior to any thing that would probably ever have emanated from unassisted reason. Nor if we turn from ancient to modern times do we perceive any indications of a material improvement in human character, where the influence of divine truth is not in operation. On the contrary, there is much in recent history, as well as in the records of times antecedent to the introduction of Christianity, which proves too convincingly that man without the Gospel is essentially such as the sentences quoted declare him to be. With all the progress that has been made in various kinds of knowledge, with all the wonderful discoveries in physical science that are bursting upon the world, with all the unprecedented achievements of mechanical genius, we do not find, where the Gospel is rejected,

that the hearts of men are becoming better. There may be a softening in the features of wickedness; but there is no substantial and decided change.

Education is regarded by many as the grand panacea for the moral evils under which the world labours; and education, even of a common secular kind, we are far indeed from undervaluing. Next to religion, it is the greatest boon that a people can enjoy. Its advantages are too obvious to need to be specified. But we cannot admit that it is equal to the task of making mankind new creatures. It will do for the many, when they obtain it, no more than it has done for the few who already possess it. But do we observe that the circumstance of a person's having been well educated is any guarantee that he is either wholly, or to a great extent, free from sinful propensities? Are not persons of the highest education often the slaves of covetousness, or wholly given to sensual indulgence? Are not jealousy and bitter envy often exhibited among the learned, as much as in the most illiterate circles? Have individuals a less tendency to pride and worldly ambition, in consequence of being well educated, than they would otherwise have had? Is it not rather, for the most part, the reverse? Secular education, therefore, whatever advantages it may have,—and they are many,—is not the philosopher's stone that can transmute an iron age into a golden one.

But what nothing else can do, the Gospel of the grace of God effects. It slays the wickedness of the human heart. Sin receives its death-wound from the arrow dipped in the blood of the Lamb. The huge leviathan laughs at other weapons, and it shakes them like mere hay and stubble from its iron scales; but it is powerless to resist the sanctifying influence of divine truth, brought home to the understanding and the heart through the Holy Spirit. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature:

old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." "We ourselves also," writes the inspired apostle, classing himself with the general body of converts, "were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving diverse lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." A perfectly similar change to that here described is experienced wherever "the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man" are really apprehended. No one can receive the Gospel without being converted from sin to holiness by its instrumentality. It teaches men effectually that, "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." It transforms an avaricious and unjust Zaccheus into a pattern of integrity and benevolence. It makes a hard-hearted and cruel tyrant, like the jailor of Philippi, wash the wounds of his prisoners. It leads dissolute Augustines and Gardiners to devote themselves to lives of temperance and purity. Out of an old African blasphemer, like John Newton, it produces a sweet singer of sacred and devout hymns, which remain to edify the people of God long after the heart, which first glowed with the warm emotions that they express, is cold in the dust. It constrains a Henry Martyn, who has but one object in view,—the attainment of earthly distinction,—to cast his idol to the moles and to the bats, and to give himself up to spend and be spent in the cause of Christ.

By thus subduing the sinful lusts of men, the Gospel dries up the streams of contention at the fountain head. It brings about peace by extinguishing the passions that

are hostile to peace. While other instrumentality can at best only lop off some branches from the Upas tree of discord, it shrivels and destroys its very roots. It is appropriately termed "the Gospel of Peace," because it reconciles man to God; but it no less appropriately bears that title because, by carrying with it the seeds of a new character, to be implanted in those who embrace it, it creates harmony between man and man. As yet, indeed, its pacific effects have been apparent only in a very limited degree, for it has been but partially received; but as it advances, and, through the blessing of the Most High, makes its way among mankind (and we saw, at the outset of the discourse, that Scripture foretells its universal diffusion), it shall give rise to a state of perfect and most blessed harmony among the members of the human family. Comparatively little as may have been the progress of the religion of Jesus hitherto, it shall spread its conquests from pole to pole,—regenerating the hearts of men, and, as it marches along, awakening at every step the odours of mutual love,—putting an end to hatred, and violence, and oppression,—loosening the bonds of the slave,—quenching the unhallowed fires of ambition, and causing wars to cease,—abolishing the names of envy, suspicion, sensuality, and grasping avarice,—giving birth to brotherly kindness, and confidence among men one towards another,—softening every thing that is austere, elevating every thing that is low, refining every thing that is gross, destroying every thing that is hateful in human character,—teaching all men, in a word, the golden lesson, to do to others as they would that others should do to them. If such is to be, in point of fact, the result of the dissemination of the doctrines of the cross, who would not pray, with a reference even to the temporal happiness of his species, for the coming of the kingdom of Christ?

"The groans of nature in this nether world,
Which Heaven has heard for ages, have an end.
. . . Six thousand years of sorrow have well-nigh
Fulfilled their tardy and disastrous course
Over a sinful world; and what remains
Of this tempestuous state of human things,
Is merely as the working of a sea
Before a calm, that rocks itself to rest.
For He whose car the winds are, and the clouds
The dust that waits upon His sultry march,
When sin hath moved Him, and His wrath is hot,
Shall visit earth in mercy; shall descend
Propitious in His chariot paved with love;
And what His storms have blasted and defaced
For man's revolt, shall with a smile repair.
. . . . All things were once
Perfect, and all must be at length restored.
Haste, then, and wheel away a shattered world,
Ye slow-revolving seasons! we would see
(A sight to which our eyes are strangers yet)
A world that does not dread and hate God's laws,
And suffer for its crime; would learn how fair
The creature is that He pronounces good,
How pleasant in itself what pleases Him."

III. The positions above illustrated lead at once to the conclusion that *he is the true peacemaker who labours to promote the spread of the purifying principles of the Gospel.*

Fancy to yourselves a vessel leaving a Christian land for some distant country, where the glad tidings of great joy have never yet been proclaimed, and where even the name of the Redeemer is unknown,—a country, it may be, where nature wears her fairest aspects, where every scene presented to the eye is beautiful, and fragrant odours are wafted on every breeze; but where, at the same time, sin reigns in its most detested forms,—a country whose homes, because unvisited by the Gospel, are the habitations of strife and horrid cruelty. The vessel carries one who has forsaken his native land, his kindred, and all that men commonly hold dear, in order that he may publish the

everlasting Gospel to the people of that heathen and degraded realm. It reaches its destination; and, taking his life in his hand, the missionary enters upon the work to which he has devoted himself. He makes known to the blinded idolaters, among whom he has come, the true character of God; he tells them of the way of acceptance through a crucified Redeemer; he speaks of that change of nature which all must undergo before they can "see the kingdom of God;" and, sowing the precious seed in tears, and watering it with many prayers, he waits for the blessing. This is a peacemaker. The tendency of his labours is to change the dark places of the earth into abodes of purity and love. Such peacemakers were the Moravians in the icy wastes of Greenland; Brainerd among the savage aboriginal tribes of North America; Williams in the islands of the Southern Ocean; Vanderkemp and Campbell and Philip on the burning plains of Africa; Morrison in China; Thomas and Carey (and, in the present day, our own Duff and his coadjutors) in India. "Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God."

We have an example of a peacemaker of the highest order in the great apostle of the Gentiles. "I have therefore," he writes to the Romans, "whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God. For I will not speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ. Yea, so have I strived to preach, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: but as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand. For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you. But now hav-

ing no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company." This striking passage sets before us, not one of the world's heroes, who has scattered his enemies on the blood-stained field of battle, and brought kingdoms under forced subjection to his rule, and who, in the intoxication of success, is contemplating further conquests of a like deadly and destructive kind,—but a hero crowned with victories won in the propagation of the Gospel, and looking forward, with a grand and sanctified ambition, (how different from the earthly principle which bears that name!) to additional and still higher achievements in the same cause. In Damascus, in Arabia, in Judea, in Antioch, in most of the provinces of Asia Minor, in Macedonia up to the very borders of Illyricum, in Athens, in Corinth, he has successfully fought the battles of the cross. But far from being satisfied with what he has accomplished (or rather, to use his own mode of expression, with what Christ has done by him), he is revolving schemes of wider reach, enterprises of vaster magnitude, than any he has yet undertaken. He eyes afar the capitol of the world, imperial Rome. Nor do his views stop even there. Rome shall be but a stage in his evangelistic progress. Spain, the western limit of the then-discovered globe, must hear the message of divine love! Search now the roll of those warriors, "demi-gods of fame," with whose deeds the page of history is full, and say to which of the number,—considering only the question of greatness of soul,—will you assign a higher place than to Paul the peacemaker?

But our attention need not be confined to extraordinary cases of ministerial talent or devotedness. When a common preacher of the Gospel labours faithfully among the

people over whom he has been set,—striving to bring unconverted men to Christ,—and urging upon those who have received the Gospel the duty of walking worthy of God, he, in his sphere, is a peacemaker. Should his ministrations be blessed for the conversion of a single sinner, or the edification of one believer, he will have contributed so far to abate contention, and to advance the reign of peace among mankind.

Of course, it is not necessary, in order to be a peacemaker, that one should occupy an official position in the church of Christ. Ministers are formally commissioned to preach the Gospel. They are expressly separated to the work. But every individual should, to the utmost of his ability, act the part of a peacemaker within the sphere of his influence. Philip was a peacemaker, when he sought out his friend Nathanael, and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." The woman of Samaria was a peacemaker, when, after her soul-awakening interview with Jesus, she "went her way into the city, and said to the men, Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" There are few private Christians who cannot do something, and all should feel themselves under obligation to do what they can for diffusing the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. Parents in particular, I may observe, should watch for the souls of their children, "as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief." They will thus be peacemakers, in the best sense, within their several domestic circles. A mother carefully trains up the babe whom God has given her,—bearing it often on her spirit at a throne of grace,—seeking, as affection and gratitude and a sense of responsibility unite in calling her to do, to incline it from its earliest years to the service of its Maker. She seizes every

opportunity, as its mind develops, to make it acquainted with the things that concern its eternal welfare, and to win it to Christ, adding the example of a pious life to her prayers and instructions. God blesses her efforts: and the son, over whom she has watched, and wept, and prayed, grows up to be an ornament to society, an honoured and consistent member of the church, perhaps an instrument of saving benefit to thousands of his fellow-men. Is not such a mother a peacemaker? But for her, the history of that child's life might have been a tale of strife, and confusion, and every evil work. Owing to her, it is a record of the exemplification of all that is sweet and amiable. BLESSED IS THE PEACEMAKER; FOR SHE SHALL BE CALLED A CHILD OF GOD.

II.

THE LOVE OF THE BRETHREN.

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."—1 John iii. 14.

The duty of a Christian is, in one sense, to love all mankind,—those who are yet unconverted and the enemies of the cross, as well as those with whom he has fellowship in the Gospel. The command is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" and our neighbour, as the parable of the good Samaritan shows, is any one to whom we have it in our power to do a kindness, though he may be an utter stranger to us, may belong to a different nation, and may profess a faith diametrically at variance with our own. So wide is the law of love that it includes even those who cherish and display the bitterest hostility towards ourselves. "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." But along with a wide affection, embracing many objects within its extensive circle, there may co-exist an affection of narrower range, and proportionally greater intensity. Accordingly, while it is the duty of a Christian to desire the welfare of all his fellow-men, he is required to cherish a special affection towards his fellow-Christians; and this is what Scripture

calls *the love of the brethren.* The people of God,—those who are united to Jesus, and have his spirit dwelling in them,—those who, having received Christ, have "had power given them to become the sons of God, being born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God,"—constitute a family distinct from the world; and "brotherly love" is the affection subsisting between members of the family.

This sentiment is often set forth in Scripture as a critical mark of genuine godliness. If the people of the Lord Jesus are regarded by me, not merely with that benevolence which I ought to feel towards all men, but with a peculiar complacency, founded upon the circumstance that they are the people of the Lord Jesus; if I love them, not for any thing which they may chance to have in common with unconverted persons,—not simply because they are my relations, or because I may have received temporal benefits from them, or because they possess those manners which, even when divorced from genuine godliness, are fitted to conciliate esteem and to win the heart,—but because they are Christians, sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, and carrying the mark of the Lamb in their foreheads;—I am warranted to regard this as evidencing the reality of my own connection with the Saviour. "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God,"—that is, love to the brethren is produced by divine influence,—"and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

On the important subject of brotherly love, I purpose now to offer a few remarks, and I shall arrange what I have

to say under two heads,—adverting *first* to some reasons why we should love the brethren; and *then* to a few of the ways in which our love to them should be manifested.

I. (1.) Among the reasons why a Christian should love the brethren, the first which I would mention is, that *there is something about every one of them specially worthy of love.* Just as we admire a star for its lustre, and relish a flower for its fragrance, so we ought to esteem Christians for their worth. They are "the excellent of the earth, in whom," said the Psalmist, "is all my delight."

The graces of the Holy Spirit, where they shine in any conspicuous manner, produce a beautiful character. Suppose a man to have been made "a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust": suppose that he is "purifying himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God": let him be one to whom "the works of the flesh—adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like"—are detestable; and who is bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit—"love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faith, temperance"; the qualities which he possesses must make him an object of complacent and admiring regard to all whose judgments sin has not perverted. Now, such essentially, though imperfectly, are all Christians. They are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people." On this account they deserve to be loved, however deficient they may be in many things that dazzle the world; just as a gem is precious in the eye of a lapidary who discerns its real value, though it may be rough in its exterior, and by no means outwardly brilliant.

The Christian character was manifested in its perfection

in the Lord Jesus. He "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth;" and, as a consequence, he was "altogether lovely." But the excellence which distinguished the Head belongs in a certain sense to each of the members. The Spirit, which was given to him without measure, rests upon them in some measure. There is a family resemblance between the younger brethren and their elder Brother. Those, therefore, who admire Christ, and whose hearts glow with warm emotions of love, in the contemplation of his matchless character, must consider his people suitable objects of affection likewise; and that, even though their external condition should be of the humblest kind; though their natural mental powers, and their acquired knowledge, should be but small; though they should be persons of no fascination of manner, of none of that playful wit and genial humour which tend so much to enliven a passing hour; yea, though they should be like Lazarus, beggars lying at some rich man's gate, to gather the crumbs swept from his table, and to have their sores licked by dogs.

It may perhaps be said that some Christians, instead of manifesting a special loveliness of character, possess disagreeable and repulsive qualities; and this is unhappily so far true. The holy beauty of believers, imperfect at the very best, is often grievously marred by the corruptions that still cling to their natures. No Christian is entirely free from unamiable dispositions, and in some Christians certain unamiable dispositions are very prominent. A person who not only professes to be, but really is, a disciple of Jesus, may show himself morose, or unsocial, or impatient of temper, or somewhat covetously inclined, or proud, or vain, or the like. Now, in reference to this, I would admit that a Christian can only be a proper object of brotherly love so far as he has been renewed in the spirit of his mind, and has been delivered, through divine

grace, from the lusts natural to men in their unregenerate state. Should his character exhibit palpable and glaring deficiencies, the brotherly esteem in which he is held by other members of the household of faith must needs be affected by this. Brotherly love is an enlightened and rational sentiment; and it is neither possible nor suitable that it should burn very ardently towards one in whom the distinguishing marks of the brotherhood are much obscured, perhaps concealed, beneath qualities of a forbidding kind. Still it is certain that, with all his defects, one whom we are called to acknowledge as a brother in the Lord will have much about him that is truly estimable. He would not be recognisable as a brother, unless the fundamental lines of the image of Christ were perceptible in him. The image may be faint and clouded, but it will be there; and its presence, even in a faint and clouded state, claims a complacent regard, such as none can be entitled to, who are strangers to vital godliness.

(2.) In the second place, a Christian should love the brethren, because *their views and feelings, on points of the highest interest, are identical with his own.*

Community of sympathies tends to produce love. Soldiers who have marched under the same leader, shared the same dangers, won the same victories; philosophers who are prosecuting their researches in the same fields of science; philanthropists who have at heart the same plans of social good, and are uniting their energies for the accomplishment of these,—naturally acquire (except where professional rivalry disturbs their amity) a mutual friendship, which is traceable to the conformity of their original tastes, or of the mental habitude produced by external circumstances. But no sympathies which a Christian can have in common with any of his fellow-men, admit of a moment's comparison with those which he possesses in common with other Christians. All who are brethren in

Christ agree substantially in their religious faith. They coincide in their opinions about God, and the method of a sinner's acceptance with him,—about man's duty, and the path of life,—about this world, and its utter insufficiency to satisfy the desires of the immortal soul,—about a future state of existence, and the preparation necessary for it. They stand in a similar gracious relation to the Most High. They have all, as sinners, fled for refuge to Jesus Christ, and are trusting to his atonement, like mariners who have escaped from shipwreck to a common place of safety; or like the brood of the hen, which, on the alarm of danger, have gathered themselves beneath the wing of the parent bird. The Holy Spirit, the sanctifier, has been imparted to all in his saving influences, turning their ideas, and affections, and desires into a heavenward channel, and disposing them to live to Him whose they are, and whom they are bound to serve. It is difficult to conceive how parties, between whom such bonds of interest really exist, can fail to regard one another with a hallowed attachment. That no love should reign among them would be as unnatural as that there should be no attraction between the different planetary bodies of a system. Fancy a choir of believers singing, in the language of the prophet, "O Lord, we will praise thee; though thou wast angry with us, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst us,"—or pouring forth in unison that other strain, "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever,"—or unitedly acknowledging God as having "sealed them and given the earnest of the Spirit in their hearts,"—fancy, I say, a company of believers so engaged together, upon their joint experience of divine grace, and yet *not* loving one another! Whatever class of sympathies you consider, the force of the conclusion which we wish to

establish will be evident. Does fellowship in sorrow produce a mutual attachment? Then Christians ought to love one another, because they have peculiar griefs, caused by the remaining sin of their own hearts, and by the prevalence of iniquity in the world. Does fellowship in happiness cement affection? Then Christians ought to love one another, because they have joys with which a stranger intermeddleth not, springing from a sense of peace with God, and from the operation of the principles of the divine life within the soul. Is friendship a result of common struggles? Then Christians ought to love one another; for what is the life of every Christian but a warfare against sin? a steady and continued pressing towards the mark of perfect holiness? Do common hopes bind together those who entertain them? Then Christians ought to love one another; for they have the hope of an inheritance beyond the grave, "incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." They expect to dwell throughout eternity in one home, beholding Jesus as he is, and reigning with him. All the high and holy principles which are at work giving a tone to the spirit of one of the brethren are precisely those which are in operation giving a tone to the spirit of the others; and what but mutual love can be the consequence? It is a physical law, that bodies charged with the same species of electricity repel one another. But in the case of souls impregnated with the electric influence of the Gospel, it is exactly the reverse. They draw together.

(3.) But I observe, thirdly, that a Christian should love the brethren, because *they are cut off, in consequence of being brethren, from enjoying the love of the world.*

A believer who lives in any measure up to his calling, and shows by his habitual deportment that he fears God, cannot possibly have the sincere and cordial friendship of unconverted men. The holiness of his walk, from the

rebuke which it administers to those whose characters are unrenewed, excites their enmity. Numerous examples may no doubt be adduced of professing Christians who are admired and courted by worldly men. But this, it is to be feared, may be sufficiently explained in the case of some by the fact that the religious element in their characters is not unpleasantly obtrusive. What offends ungodly men in a Christian is the odour of living godliness which he gives forth. They will not be offended at one who, as he makes himself known among them, is a scentless flower. Should a Christian, however, be admired and courted by the ungodly without this heavy charge lying at his door, it will be for something else than his Christianity. As far as *that* is concerned, they will certainly be averse to his society, and endure it with impatience—endure it only for the sake of his non-religious qualities. "If ye were of the world," our Saviour said, in language applicable to all times, "the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

If this be true, how powerful an argument arises in favour of brotherly love! Christians form a family, enclosed by a circle which separates them from the rest of mankind. The little flock within the circle can have no intimate communion with those that are beyond it. Ought not this to induce a closer union and a more confiding familiarity between themselves? With those who know not Christ, a believer may meet and talk about matters of temporal interest: but for intercourse in regard to the things that lie nearest his heart—for spiritual counsel—for such converse as will strengthen his devotional feelings and confirm his holy resolutions,—he must look to his fellow-Christians. Is not this a reason why his fellow-Christians should always maintain towards him a kind and friendly relation, and should especially keep their hearts open to him, when he requires

or seeks religious fellowship? Each of the children of God should be made to find, in the fulness, and constancy, and heavenly nature of the affection which wells out towards him from his brethren in Christ, that he has no need to envy those who possess the friendship of the world, or to be anxious to share their privilege in this respect.

The consideration which we are enforcing should have especial weight in leading the members of the brotherhood to exercise Christian love towards converts, who, in giving themselves to the Saviour, have recently been separated from all their former companions. When an individual, whose friendships lie exclusively among irreligious men, becomes a subject of divine grace, one of the first effects of the change which he has undergone is to alter his relations to those with whom he has been accustomed to associate. Intimate familiarity with them can no longer be kept up. It could only be maintained by his continuing to join in their ways, which he cannot do, because he now considers these sinful. Many, in the circumstances described, are called to suffer from their former friends what is by no means a slight species of persecution, in the shape of frequent jeers and mockery about their new manner of life. But though a convert should escape this, his intercourse with his old irreligious companions necessarily ceases to be any thing but of the most general kind. To all practical purposes, he is sundered from their society, like a rock broken off from the mass of which it once formed a part. Is not such an individual, I ask, peculiarly entitled to the cordial affection of all belonging to the body of Christ? Has he not a claim upon their love, not only on other accounts, but on this also,—to compensate for the worldly friendships which he has sacrificed?

(4.) A fourth reason why Christians should love the brethren is, because *Christ identifies himself with his people in the treatment of which they are the objects.*

The fact of such an identification is brought out with remarkable vividness in the account given by our Lord of the transactions of the great judgment day: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."

It is difficult to imagine any thing more adapted to foster brotherly love, and in particular to encourage its active manifestations, than the consideration here presented. What Christian would not be eager, were the Saviour personally within his reach, to testify his regard to him in every possible way? You would rejoice, my friends,—

surely, if you are believers, you would,—to have the opportunity of contributing in the smallest degree to the comfort of your Lord, of relieving any of his wants, or of mitigating any of his griefs. You would esteem that a privileged occasion on which you were permitted to break some precious box of ointment, that you might anoint his feet. If so, a method is pointed out by which you may give practical expression to such feelings. The person of Christ is beyond the sphere of your affectionate offices. The heavens have received him, until the times of restitution of all things. But he has directed you to act towards his people as you would act towards him, and has assured you that he will count what you do to them as done to himself. Look upon them, therefore, as standing in his place, and treat them accordingly. To seek to injure a Christian is to seek to injure Christ. To despise a Christian for his poverty, or low worldly station, or lack of intellectual ability, or defective education, or any similar cause, is to despise Christ. To be cold, and haughty, and disdainful towards a Christian, is to be cold, and haughty, and disdainful towards Christ. To neglect a Christian, when he needs your kindly interposition, is to neglect Christ. To shut your heart against the wants of a Christian is to shut your heart against the wants of Christ. To be insensible to the distresses of a Christian is to be insensible to the distresses of Christ. On the other hand, to love the people of Christ because they are his, and to be kind to them for his sake, is to love Christ, and to show kindness to him. Were the matter habitually regarded in this light, oh! how warm, and how abundant, and rich in its manifestations, would be the brotherly affection of believers to one another!

(5.) The only other reason that I shall mention why Christians should love one another is, that *brotherly love among the members of the church is indispensable in order to their mutually edifying one another, and has, at the same*

time, a peculiar influence in commending Christianity to the world.

The growth of grace in a believer's heart is greatly dependent upon the fellowship which he maintains with other believers. The proverb holds good in matters of religion, no less than in other things, "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." When a person has no religious society,—when he is not in the habit of meeting with godly acquaintances, and conversing with them, in a confiding and practical manner, about the common salvation,—his piety will almost certainly be found (unless the want of Christian society be his misfortune rather than his fault) to be at a low ebb. Hence such injunctions as the following, to be met with on every page of Scripture:—"Comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do." "We exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men." Even the apostle Paul, in writing to the Romans, expresses a desire to visit them, in the hope of being benefited by them, as well as of benefiting them: "I long to see you that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; that is, that I may be comforted* together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me." What Christian, however advanced, has not felt the advantage of communion with other members of the body of Christ,—if not in the way of adding to his knowledge, and removing difficulties that pressed upon his mind, at least in the way of deepening his humility, confirming

* This term in the original is not so restricted in its signification as our word *comforted*. It denotes *spiritual encouragement* in the largest sense. Calvin on the passage appropriately says,—"Dicit se in ea parte cupere illis commodare suam operam, ubi juvandi sunt adhuc, qui maxime profecerunt. . . . . Nec contentus hac modestia, subjicit præterea correctionem, qua ostendit, se sibi non ita docend ilocum usurpare, quin mutuo ab illis discere cupiat."

his faith, kindling his devotion, stirring up his zeal, aiding his realization of unseen things, assuaging his griefs, animating his hopes, augmenting his spiritual joy? But in order to that intercourse among Christians, on which both Scripture and experience prove that their progress in the divine life so much depends, sincere mutual love is necessarily presupposed. No one will open his heart to another, and speak freely about what relates to his eternal interests, if there be the least degree of coldness between them,—if there be not, I should rather say, positive love between them. Either a want of affection on our part to a brother in Christ, or a suspicion in our minds of his want of affection to us, closes our lips, and bars us from every thing deserving the name of Christian communion with that man.

While brotherly love among the members of the church is thus indispensable, in order to their mutually edifying one another, it has a peculiar influence in commending Christianity to the world. Few things tend more to indispose irreligious men for thinking favourably of the Gospel than the want of affection which they observe among Christians. They look at the meetings of public religious bodies, and they perceive that scenes of acrimonious and bitter strife are of frequent occurrence there. They look at the conduct of professing Christians in private life, and they see two individuals, members of the same church, living on terms of rancorous hostility,—seizing every occasion to injure each other by word or deed,—or, if they do not express their hatred in a palpable outward manner, showing by infallible tokens that they have a mutual dislike at heart. What is the consequence? The cause of religion suffers. Ungodly men are furnished with an excuse which, however unsatisfactory in reality, they are at least able plausibly to allege for their neglect of religion. "Christians are no better than ourselves. What should we gain

by embracing a creed, the adherents of which display such a spirit towards one another?" If you are indeed the disciples of Jesus, I am persuaded, my friends, that you do not wish to afford the slightest handle to the enemies of the cross to speak in this way. You would not wish to wound Christ in the house of his friends. Be careful then to love those who are your brethren in the Lord. By avoiding, in your conduct towards them, every thing inconsistent with brotherly feeling, you will take away (as far as you are concerned) occasion for speaking evil of the Gospel from them that desire occasion. Instead of exposing Christianity to reproach, you should be anxious, by abounding in love towards the members of Christ's body, to "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." In primitive times it was a common saying among the heathen, "Behold how these Christians love one another;" and doubtless the singular brotherly love then prevailing had an important connection instrumentally with the numerous conversions which distinguished that period. How good a thing would it be, and how happy an effect might we anticipate that it would have upon the world at large, were the love subsisting among the professed disciples of Jesus at the present day likewise so marked that all men should be constrained to take knowledge of it!

II. Having thus mentioned several reasons why Christians should love one another, I proceed to advert to some of the ways in which their mutual love should be manifested. This has necessarily to some extent been brought out in the illustrations given under the former part of the discourse, and therefore our remarks now may be more brief.

(1.) First of all, it may be observed generally that, if we love the brethren, *we will have a disposition to do*

them all the good in our power. "As we have therefore opportunity," is the inspired injunction, "let us do good unto all men, especially unto them that are of the household of faith." If any member of the brotherhood, for instance, can assist another in his honest endeavours to earn a livelihood, and to establish himself in a respectable social position, he should do it. And where members of the brotherhood, through age or infirmity, or other unavoidable causes, are in want, those who are rich ought to relieve their necessities. "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" Should a Christian be called to suffer the stroke of divine providence, in his own person or in some near relation, his brethren in the Lord should sympathise with him, and endeavour, by delicate and tender ministrations, and by Christian counsel, to lighten his affliction. Whatever we may at any time have experienced of the supporting and consoling power of the Gospel in our own case has been granted us for this, among other reasons, that we "may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves have been comforted of God." These are mentioned merely as specimens of the kind offices which believers owe to one another,—offices the very meanest of which the Saviour has pledged himself to repay. "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."

(2.) But in the second place, the existence of brotherly love among Christians should manifest itself by *a readiness to bear with the infirmities and to forgive the offences of one another.*

Christians have their infirmities. I said, in an early part of the discourse, that in every believer there is

something worthy of love. I added (what is unhappily too true likewise), that in every believer failings are to be found. The solar spectrum, formed by the transmission of a ray of light through a glass prism, where the various colours appear in rainbow brightness, is a beautiful object; but the brightest spectrum, if examined closely, will be perceived to have dark lines running through it. In like manner, the character of the most perfect child of God is not free from traces of depravity. In the mutual intercourse of Christians, unamiable qualities will be at times exhibited,—selfishness, or pride, or passion, or peevishness, or an unaccommodating disposition, or the like. These are the dark lines in the spectrum. Now, it is a part of Christian love to bear with a brother's infirmities. It is not necessary that we should shut our eyes to what is wrong in his temper or conduct. It may even be our duty to expostulate with him on his failings, and to use our influence to lead him to correct these. But we should not become alienated from him. We should love him still. When his faults tend to create dislike in our minds, we should consider how they are more than counterbalanced by his excellencies. Let us not commit the grievous injustice of permitting the weeds in his garden to make us overlook the flowers which are there also,—flowers of beauteous hue and delightful fragrance.

It may happen that one whom we regard as a brother in the Lord is guilty of improper conduct towards ourselves. In such circumstances, however much and justly offended, we should be ready to forgive him. Not that we are called to be insensible to the injury, or to submit to it tamely without seeking redress. If our character, for instance, has been defamed, the interests of religion itself may render it necessary for us to rebut the slander with indignation, and to break off intercourse with the offending party till he acknowledges his fault and makes

due reparation. But upon his being brought to see his sin and to express regret for it, and seeking to be reconciled to us, we should hold out the hand of reconciliation to him frankly and sincerely. The deep resentments, the long-lasting grudge, the desire for retaliation, the eye for eye and tooth for tooth feeling, that are so universal in the world, should have no place in the church. But as the apostle said to the Ephesians, "Be *ye* kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

3. In the third place, if we love the brethren, *this should appear by our choosing them as our private friends, and cultivating Christian fellowship with them.*

To enter into relations of close and familiar friendship with men who are strangers to vital godliness, is about as grievous an error as a professing Christian can commit. He can hardly avoid, in frequenting the society of such persons, being often tempted into a measure of conformity to their sinful practices. He must feel, so long as his conscience retains any degree of tenderness, that he is altogether out of place among them; and the effect of his familiarity with them must be to exercise a general deadening influence upon his soul. They may be persons of good outward moral character, who would lead him into nothing obviously and grossly vicious; but it will be here, as in the freezing of water. Observe the surface of a pool on a winter evening, when the frost first comes on. It does not pass, by an immediate and rapid transition, from the liquid to the solid state; but insensibly a sluggishness seems to creep over it; a thin, uncertain film succeeds; and presently it is sheeted with a crust, growing every moment thicker and stronger. So, if a professed disciple of the Lord Jesus makes unconverted men his familiar friends, and the chief associates of his leisure hours; though they may not lead him, by any one great palpable step, into

wickedness which his soul would detest, their society will have a gradual freezing influence upon all his spiritual affections,—an influence the more dangerous because it is gradual. Breathing the constant atmosphere of their company, he will imbibe their spirit. They will to a certainty infect him with their worldliness of character, their indifference to what is good, their forgetfulness of God, and their disrelish for the service of God.

The chosen companions of a believer, therefore, ought to be believers. I do not mean that he should never associate with worldly men; or that, when he does meet them in business or in the social circle, he should be otherwise than agreeable and complaisant towards them. But occasional intercourse and uniform civility are different things from close and familiar friendship. Let him reserve that for individuals whom he regards as belonging to the brotherhood; and let the intercourse which he maintains with them be imbued with the savour of religion. O, what cause of lamentation is there, that even where intimacies exist between Christians, so little Christian fellowship takes place! How rare is it for members of the church to open their hearts to one another on the subject of their common faith and hope! There is among us too much "keeping silence" on what should be the great topic of our mutual converse—too little acting in the spirit of the Psalmist, when he said, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." An exquisite picture is drawn by the prophet Malachi, of Christians holding free and unrestrained intercourse together, Jehovah meanwhile looking down from heaven approvingly, and announcing his satisfaction. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name. And

they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." If we are conscious, my believing friends, of not having sufficiently cultivated in time past the species of fellowship which this passage describes, let us resolve to cultivate it more in future.

4. If brotherly love prevailed as it ought to do, *it would put an end to wrangling and sinful debate in the deliberations of ecclesiastical bodies.*

The unnatural spectacle of such features in the meetings of bodies composed of professing Christians is too frequent. In Presbyteries and Synods, for example, who has not been pained by the party-spirit, the disputative temper, and the heat, at times manifested? by the unchristian language employed, the recriminations indulged in, and the want of a pervading holy harmony of spirit among the members? May I be permitted, with all humility, to suggest to my Fathers and Brethren, that we would be consulting the honour of Christ's name and the credit of religion, if we endeavoured to discuss all the matters that came before us in church courts with greater unity of mind and heart, and with less of the semblance of worldly controversy?* In like manner, when Kirk-sessions or Congregational Assemblies are convened for the transaction of the business that belongs to them, union and brotherly spirit are of unspeakable importance. Differences of opinion will, undoubtedly, in many cases, be honestly entertained; and it is only right that these should be frankly avowed. But church members should guard against violence and acrimony in stating their views, or in impugning those of

* Of course, this sentence was not in the discourse as originally preached to the author's congregation. But it has been introduced here, under the conviction that the suggestion is needed; and with the hope, both that the author will not be reckoned presumptuous in offering it, and that it may be favourably considered by those members of our Presbyteries and Synods under whose notice the volume may come.

others; they should beware of sinful emulation, and of that Diotrephean desire of pre-eminence into which even good men are apt to be betrayed; and they should not allow themselves to cherish dissatisfaction when their views happen not to be adopted; but should endeavour to fall in with the decisions come to by the general voice. "I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that *ye* all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among *you;* but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

5. In the last place, brotherly love, if it prevailed as it ought to do, *would quickly put an end to not a few of the denominational distinctions that exist among Christians; while at the same time it would lead those who remain denominationally separate to be more friendly, and more ready to co-operate for the advancement of the common faith.*

There are several bodies of professing Christians in this land which agree so completely in almost every point of moment, that one would suppose there is no necessity for their being separate. I would ask you to consider, for instance, if there be any good reason why we, forming the Presbyterian Church of Canada, and our brethren of the United Presbyterian Church, should continue to exist as two bodies? There may be a slight difference between the churches on a single question; but is the difference such that it might not be adjusted if both parties were anxious to be united, and were prepared to consider the difference in a spirit of forbearance and mutual affection? I think not. Professing Christians, closely approximating to one another in doctrine and in form of church-government, but ranged under separate denominational banners, are apt, through rivalry (which is always keenest where the real difference between churches is least), to be betrayed into feelings, I will not say of hostility, but at least

of alienation: and such feelings commonly remain, and operate as a bar to union long after the great majority of reflecting men, both in the one communion and in the other, have come to the conclusion that no sufficient reason can be given why they should not be united. I am disposed to believe that this is very much the state of the case between our United Presbyterian friends and ourselves. The chief obstacle to our immediate incorporation appears to lie in the want of a sufficiently cordial and hearty disposition towards one another. When this is removed, incorporation will follow; and we will wonder that we were so long in coming to that issue. The two ecclesiastical bodies at present may be compared to two drops of dew upon a leaf, sundered by a very infinitesimal space indeed, and requiring only a little more of the attracting power of love to draw them into absolute contact, and to transfuse their separate spheres into a single and undivided globule.

With respect to those bodies of professing Christians with which it would not be proper for us to form an incorporating union; but which, in consequence of their holding the essential doctrines of the Gospel, we recognise as branches of the true church,—brotherly love teaches us to maintain towards them a spirit of amity, and to co-operate with them as far as we can, consistently with the interests of truth. Even while protesting (as it is our duty to do) against the false doctrine which we conceive them to hold, we should be careful to avoid every thing like denunciation or abuse. We should guard against the common error of undervaluing the evangelistic labours of persons belonging to other denominations. We should not be jealous of the success that they meet with in preaching the Gospel; but, on the contrary, should rejoice in the good which they are doing, and should give God thanks on account of it. We should use no unworthy means to make proselytes from other Christian bodies to that with

which we are connected,—though, of course, if we are sincere in our denominational beliefs, we must desire that all men should be brought to receive our views; and we cannot be considered as transgressing the law of brotherly love when we endeavour, by fair and open argument, to convince the adherents of another communion that, in the points on which they disagree with us, they are in error. And in fine, whatever be the differences between two Christian bodies (really deserving to be called Christian), there will always be many questions of general religious interest, in regard to which they can act together on the principles of an "Evangelical Alliance" (whether they be formally associated into such an alliance or not),—many plans, bearing on the maintenance and extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, which they can join their efforts to carry out,—many occasions of public meeting, when they can be assembled on a common platform to advocate objects dear to all alike, and to pray with one voice and soul for blessings which all desire; thus furnishing to the world a visible representation of substantial oneness amidst denominational diversity. When one's love of the brethren is at all of an expanded kind, it will cause him to delight in such opportunities of co-operating with his fellow-disciples of other communions; and that all the more on account of the differences existing betwixt himself and them. A believer, of true and generous affections, usually experiences a greater glow of pleasure in finding himself side by side, in any religious cause, with brethren of other denominations than with those of his own. Why? Because he loves the former more than the latter? No: but because he rejoices to feel that he belongs to the same family with the former as well as with the latter. Alas! there is something greatly defective in the Christianity of that man who has room, in the chambers of his heart, for none except those who pronounce his own Shibboleth.

III.

EVERY THING BEAUTIFUL IN HIS TIME.

"He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart; so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end."—Eccl. iii. 11.*

The opening verses of the chapter before us contain an induction of particulars made with a view of illustrating the fact, that we live in a world of changes,—changes, however, not befalling man fortuitously, but arranged and brought about by a Supreme Power. While human life is full of vicissitudes, the labour and sorrow arising from its perpetually altering conditions are, in the language of the sacred writer, "travail which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it." Our text immediately succeeds the induction of particulars referred to, and expresses a general principle which, in contemplation of the vicissitudes of this mortal existence, it is most important to be assured of, namely, that all the arrangements of divine providence are good. "He," God, "hath made every thing beautiful in his time." Excellence may be affirmed of all that God brings to pass, let the shape and colour of events be to the eye of sense what they may.

* The illustrative examples introduced under the second head of this Discourse were selected in preference to others, because shortly before the Discourse was preached several deaths of children had occurred in families belonging to the congregation to which the Author ministered.

The middle clause of the text, "Also he hath set the world in their heart," may appear to an English reader somewhat obscure, and therefore I shall pause for a moment to explain it. There is perhaps no term in our language exactly corresponding to what is rendered "the world." It does not mean the globe, the solid material world on which we tread; nor the pleasures which the world presents, as the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; but it means the world regarded as a continuous and lengthened series of events stretching, on the one side, back to the very commencement of time, and on the other, forward without limit. It means, if I may so express myself, the world of divine dispensation—the world of providential evolution. This being understood, the clause, "Also he hath set the world in their heart," signifies that man has been endowed by God with a natural propensity to inquire into the mysteries of providence. That person must have a strange mind who does not often ponder the things which have been and the things which must be. Standing upon the side of the stream of time, we cast our eyes upwards and ask, from what fountains have its waters flowed? And at the same time we cast our eyes downwards and ask, whither are they flowing? A brute thinks but of the passing moment; but God has given to us "thoughts that wander through eternity,"—wander alike through the world of the past and the world of the future.

And yet this propensity to investigate the ways of God is not such that even the most diligent exercise of it can lead to a perfect comprehension of them on our part. This is the meaning of the last clause of the verse, "So that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end." The seaman's line can sound the ocean along its shores; but as he stretches out from land, he soon gets into depths whose bottom no plummet ever

touched. The telescope and calculus of the astronomer can measure the planetary distances which are comparatively near; but let him pursue his exploration of the sky, and he will presently be lost amidst magnitudes beyond conception. So it would be vain to expect an understanding of the providence of God, in its full extent, or any thing approaching to that, from even the most patient and profound investigations. A little of his working may be seen, but it will be no more than a little. To take in the whole scheme,—"to find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end," is knowledge too great for us: it is high, we cannot attain unto it.

The import of the text thus being—that GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL WORKS, ENCOMPASSED THOUGH THEY OFTEN ARE WITH MYSTERY, ARE ALL BEAUTIFUL,—that the ways of God, however inscrutable, are invariably excellent,—let me ask you to meditate a little on this deeply interesting and most important subject. And, *first*, we shall consider the events of human life as coming from the hand of God. "He hath made," or done, "every thing." *Secondly*, we shall inquire in what sense beauty can be said to belong to all the divine dispensations. "He hath made every thing beautiful in his time." And, *finally*, we shall notice the idea suggested by the words, "Also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end," namely, that our inability to fathom the divine procedure is no reason for our questioning its excellence.

I. We are to begin by considering the events of life as coming from the hand of God. "He hath made," or done, "every thing."

Much error, both speculative and practical, prevails on this fundamental point. Views are held by many which would go to exclude Jehovah altogether from the management of the

universe. The constancy of the laws of nature is so insisted upon as to convey the impression that He, by whom the worlds were made, sits in heaven, contemplating the arena of human action as an inert spectator, never making his operation, in any strict and proper sense, felt, nor at all determining the results which come to pass; but merely permitting the machine which he has set up to take its course, except in so far as its action may be modified by the uncertain passions of men. If the providence of God is thus disallowed by many as a matter of theory, by how many more is his connection with events practically forgotten! When individuals are prosperous in their temporal circumstances, how seldom do they feel that God has given them their prosperity; or, when unfortunate, that God had sent misfortune upon them! How few, when their children grow up like olive plants around their table, no breach happening in their number, habitually say, "This must be ascribed to the divine goodness;" or feel, on the other hand, when the angel of death enters their door, and with icy touch stops the beating of the pulse of life in some beloved and joyous member of the domestic circle, "This is the doing of the Lord!"

The denial of an overruling providence, whether speculative or practical, is little better than infidelity. If Scripture is to be believed, the hand of God is as certainly to be recognised in the events of life as in the works of nature. "Our God," the Psalmist writes, "is in the heavens, he hath done whatsoever he pleased." "Are not two sparrows," the Saviour said, "sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall to the ground without your heavenly Father." So likewise in our text it is affirmed that every thing in the world of events is made, fashioned, brought to pass, by God.

We do not, of course, doubt the invariable operation of second causes, nor suppose any miraculous interference

with established natural laws, in what we find daily happening. But we maintain that all second causes have been so arranged by the Most High as to accomplish what he pleases, in the manner and at the seasons which he has determined. "Fire, hail, snow, vapour and stormy wind, fulfil his word." Physical agents produce their effects "according to his ordinances; for all are his servants."

An error on the subject of which I am speaking is sometimes committed, even by pious persons, in supposing that occurrences which are of a remarkable description, or which lead to important consequences, are brought about by some more special interposition of divine providence than others. When pestilence, for example, rages in a city, sweeping off hundreds to an untimely grave between the rising and setting of every sun,—pestilence that has come none knows whence, and which mocks all the efforts of human skill,—we shall hear it said, "This is the finger of God," and in one sense it is undeniably so. "Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it?" And yet the remark may not be true in the sense which the words are intended to convey. The meaning may be, that there is some more peculiar operation of God's hand in such a strange and awful visitation than in the ordinary events of everyday life, which certainly is not the case. The most trivial and commonplace occurrence that befalls an individual is just as much, and in the same way, the doing of the Lord, as occurrences which, by their intrinsic magnitude, their mysterious and tremendous character, and the train of consequences which they bring along with them, awaken the attention, excite the awe, and rebuke the ungodliness of nations. "He hath done," our text tells us, not things which are great, or are accounted by mankind to be so,—not things which are extraordinary and out of the usual run of affairs,—but he hath done "every thing." His providence is universal, embracing the vast and

the minute alike,—the falling of a hair from our heads equally with the overthrow of an empire.

II. Let us now inquire, as proposed secondly, in what sense beauty can be affirmed of all events coming from the hand of God. "He hath made every thing beautiful in his time."

Were we interpreting these words as referring to creation, they would be universally understood, and their truth for the most part readily conceded. Few men, and those only persons of a grovelling and low-pitched spirit, are insensible to the beauty which distinguishes the works of nature. The earth is beautiful, in its variety of hill and dale; the firmament is beautiful, whether the sun in its surpassing glory shine there alone by day, or numberless stars tremble in its depths by night; so also is the great sea, now tossed by tempests, and again outstretched in calm and mirror-like expanse. The flowers are beautiful, as they open their blossoms in spring; the trees are beautiful, bending beneath the mellow fruits of autumn; winter is beautiful, with its frost, and snow-flakes, and icicles. Every organism, vegetable or animal, is beautiful. No man ever yet detected an object in nature which had not the beauty appropriate to its place in the material system. The tiniest weed and the most microscopic insect furnish in all their parts matter for the enthusiastic admiration of the naturalist. But the loveliness which distinguishes every feature in the face of creation is not more admirable,—I might even say it is less admirable,—than the loveliness which belongs to every feature in the face of Providence. "Think," the Psalmist writes,

> "on the works that he hath done,
> Which admiration breed;
> His wonders and the judgments all
> Which from his mouth proceed."

Doubtless we less easily recognise the latter description of loveliness than the former. Viewed from a particular position, the lines in the countenance of Providence often seem harsh and forbidding; but they are not so in reality. All the particulars of the divine procedure are beautiful in their respective seasons.

Their beauty lies in their fitness to promote the best and highest ends. We assume that God, in his providential dealings, acts invariably with some end, some good and excellent end worthy of himself. Were events casual,—or, since this language has no very intelligible signification, were they not determined by a superintending Providence,—there would be no room for the question, What is the end or purpose of a particular dispensation? Why has it been sent? On the supposition made, it could not properly be said to have been sent at all. But if we have a persuasion that God takes an universal superintendence of human affairs, so that not a change, however slight, can befall us except as ordained by Him, we are then compelled to believe that each event of Providence is meant to serve a purpose,—a purpose answerable to the perfections of Him by whom the wheels of providence are moved. Now it is in this that the beauty of God's providential works consists; that, as they are designed, so they are adapted to accomplish the most excellent results. Does prosperity shine with a steady and augmenting lustre upon your heads? Or, on the contrary, have reverses clouded your temporal prospects? In either case, the dispensation is beautiful in its time, as it has been ordered, and wisely ordered, with a view to your greatest final benefit: that is, if you are a believer; because it is only to believers—to them that love God and are the called according to his purpose—that the statement applies, "All things work together for good." Is *this* family for a long series of years unbroken by death, and *that* visited with numerous

breaches? The latter circumstance, viewed as a dispensation coming from God, will be found to be equally beautiful with the former, if tried by the rule of tendency and effects. The beauty of a wheel in a machine is, that, in unison with other parts of the machinery, it serves the purpose of the maker; and what is providence but a vast and complicated machine, portions of which, if considered absolutely and alone, might be judged to be evil rather than good; yet every portion of which, if considered relatively to its ultimate object, is entitled to supreme admiration?

In illustrating this view, I might select from the induction of particular providences with which the chapter before us opens, any of the cases specified. I shall choose one mentioned in the second verse,—"A time to be born, and a time to die: a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted." *There is a time to die.* The period and circumstances of the death of every individual are ordered by God, and (the doctrine of the text is) beautifully ordered.

There is a time to die, and that time may be the zenith of an individual's usefulness. So it was with Stephen. Few in the early Christian Church promised to be more useful in their lives than Stephen; but he died in the blaze of his exertions; and the scattering of the Christians consequent upon his death, and the wider dissemination of divine truth through their means, demonstrated his removal, at the period when he fell, to be a beautiful arrangement. So it was with M'Cheyne. What a calamity to the church was his death considered, when, at an early age, and in the midst of a career of remarkable success, he rested from his labours! Yet what Christian doubts that that dispensation in the scheme of providence was beautifully arranged? His untimely dissolution (untimely in one sense, for the very thing I am affirming is, that it was most timeous in another) calling attention to his fervid piety

and holy converse as represented in his writings,—those writings by which he, being dead, yet speaketh,—has rendered him an instrument of saving benefit to perhaps more than he could have influenced by having a longer period of personal labour assigned to him ; as the Israelitish champion slew more of the enemies of his country in his death than in his life. Had Howard or Wilberforce died, the one, when about to undertake his noble task of prison reformation, and the other, on the eve of devoting himself to the cause of emancipation ; those acquainted with their intentions and energies would have been ready to say, "What a misfortune has befallen the world in their decease!" But would this have been a correct feeling? Strictly speaking, no. The proper view of the matter would have been that their death, at the particular juncture, was upon the whole best, and that the All-wise Disposer of events saw it to be so, else he would not have withdrawn them from the field.

There is a time to die, and that time may be the morning of existence. There are not a few persons in this congregation who have had children taken from them by death ; and who have found it hard, when this has occurred, to realise the truth that every thing which God does is "beautiful in his time." We expect the old to die. The grey-haired, feeble, tremulous old man, to whom the grasshopper has long been a burden, expires without more astonishment on the part of survivors than when the sun, having completed its semidiurnal circuit, and come by gradual approaches to the horizon, sinks at length beneath it. How different when a child, in all the beauty of a strong and vigorous boyhood, just entering on the course of life, full of promise, one of those whom a Christian poet so exquisitely describes as

> "Young loves, young hopes dancing on morning's cheek ;
> Gems leaping in the coronet of love ;

> Gay, guileless, sportive, lovely little things,
> *Playing around the den of sorrow*, clad
> In smiles"—

how different when such an one struggles for a brief period with some overmastering disease, or, it may be, like the Shunammite's son, sits upon his mother's knee but from morn till noon, and then dies! Are the words, "He hath made every thing beautiful in his time," applicable with any propriety here? Is there aught beautiful in that form of sickness which has seized upon the little sufferer, banishing the bloom from his cheek, the lustre from his eye, the liveliness and action from his limbs? Aught beautiful in the shadows of dissolution evidently deepening around his head as hour succeeds to hour? Aught beautiful in the felt presence of what has been called "the king of terrors" hovering over the bed, and just about to launch his dart? Is there aught beautiful in this coffin, where the beloved object is hid for ever from view? or in this wide and yawning grave, where the mouldering body shall mingle with its kindred dust? "No!" would be the melancholy but necessary response of one who was unhappily a stranger to divine truth. "No!" is frequently the first impulsive answer of afflicted nature, even where the power of religion is not unknown—"there is nothing beautiful in all that has been mentioned; the dispensation is gloomy and forbidding." But Faith, when stirred into exercise, answers differently. To the inquiry, "Is it well?" its lips, though trembling with emotion as they speak, rejoin, "It is well."

How or in what sense well? Here our answer must of necessity be given in the conjectural form. Perhaps that child, had he been spared to grow up to mature years, might have lived only to pursue a course of iniquity, and thus to be a source of disgrace to his parents, and to bring down their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. Perhaps his removal may be a salutary lesson to those who feel his

loss so keenly, admonishing them of the frail tenure by which all earthly things are held, and leading them to set their affections upon those things which are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God. Perhaps the stroke may be a means of profit to many, even beyond the household on which it has fallen, in the way of showing the vanity of time, and bringing eternity nearly and impressively home to their minds. I need not multiply such observations. Other contingencies of a similar kind will readily suggest themselves to your minds. But I make this application: if, on the one hand, the removal of a child in the very budding of his existence prevents consequences of the most unhappy kind (which for all that we can tell might occur); and if, on the other hand, his removal shall, by the blessing of God, produce positive results in the spiritual and eternal welfare of survivors (as we can easily see that it is adapted to do); then sad and painful as it undoubtedly is in itself, it must, when considered in its relative bearings, be pronounced a wise, a good, an admirable, and altogether a beautiful dispensation. It would not, on a large view of the scheme of providence, have been good for that child to live longer in the world. "Its time to die" was well chosen.

III. I hasten, however, as proposed in the third place, to notice the idea suggested by the latter part of the text, that our inability to discover the object which God has in view in any case, or to satisfy ourselves of the fitness of a particular dispensation, ought not to interfere with our belief in the necessary beauty of the divine procedure.

What does God mean by his procedure? How is his procedure adapted to gain the end contemplated? We naturally put such questions, especially when affliction befalls us; for God has "set the world in our hearts," has endowed us with a propensity to inquire into his dispensa-

tions. But not unfrequently we are unable to discern the object of the Most High in his dealings; and at the very best our insight into divine providence is limited. "No man," as the text expresses it, "can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end." Now, this being so, I say that our conviction of the necessary and essential excellence of the ways of God does not rest upon the amount of our insight into them, but partly upon our knowledge of God's wisdom and benignity, and partly upon the express testimony of his own Word.

In the complicated dispositions of a field of battle, a movement which the commander makes might seem, to a person to whom a view of the whole ground was not afforded, or who had not sufficient military skill to judge of its propriety, a very unfortunate step; yet that may be the movement which gains the battle and decides the destinies of nations. The result may prove it to have been a most beautiful evolution. So in divine providence. To Jacob it seemed a very unfortunate thing that Benjamin was compelled to be taken down into Egypt. "All these things," the distressed patriarch exclaimed, "are against me." But had one of the angels, whom he beheld in his dream at Bethel, ascending and descending upon the ladder that connected heaven and earth, been commissioned again to appear, and to explain to him the still undeveloped scheme which God was working out, he would have been convinced (as he did become before his death) that the view he was taking was a most shortsighted one, and that all the things which he deplored were, in reality, favourable to him. In general, suppose the most dark and inscrutable dispensation to befall a Christian; he is warranted, and not only is he warranted, but it is his duty, to reason thus regarding it: "In order to be able to judge of such an event, I would require to be placed in a position of higher observation than I now occupy, and to be gifted

with an eye of larger vision than I now possess. I can discern only a small part of God's works. I will therefore judge nothing before the time. I will live on in faith—in faith, that when the termination of the course of providence is reached, and the whole scheme unfolded to me, I shall see both what God designs, and how such and such things tend to accomplish his design. Unable though I be to discover the wisdom and goodness of particular events, these events may be beautiful in the estimation of beings differently situated and able to take more capacious views. I am persuaded that they must be so; and I do not doubt that even to myself the fact that they are so shall be made manifest at a future time."

In conclusion, how valuable is the religion of the Bible, in this, as in many other respects—that it furnishes support and comfort to the people of God, in times of the greatest distress!

Apart from religion, there cannot possibly be any solid and rational comfort, under many forms of trouble. Suppose an irreligious man to be visited with some of the severe calamities incident to human life,—suppose some object, around which all the cords of his affections are entwined, to be suddenly removed,—suppose the light of his eyes and the joy of his heart to be taken away with a stroke. What then? Until time has taught him to forget, what reflection can console him? What resource has he to fall back upon? What circumstance can be found to countervail his loss? Not one! Let him call upon his gods, and see if they will answer him. Alas! heaven and earth are silent to the voice of his desolated soul. He will look to every quarter for consolation; and the deep will answer, It is not in me; and the sea will answer, It is not in me. Leave religion out of view, assume the hypothesis of the infidel, and what *can* you bring forward by way of comforting one under deep distress? Will

you repeat such miserable commonplaces as, that affliction is the lot of humanity,—it is common,—and that excessive grief can do no good, and, therefore, should not be indulged,—and that it is a noble thing to bear up and endure with fortitude? Or will you urge upon the sufferer the unreasonableness of fretting against the natural laws, by whose operation his affliction has been occasioned, seeing that no one can reflect for a moment, without being convinced that it is much better for these laws to be as they are, though necessarily productive at times of severest anguish to individuals, than that they should be otherwise? All this, if this is all that can be said (and what can infidelity say more?), is the mockery rather than the balm of grief. "What man is there of you who if his son ask bread will he give him a stone, or if he ask a fish will he give him a serpent?"

But on the contrary, how richly consoling, how adequate for every season of distress, are the views which the Word of God supplies to those by whom it is believed! Let a Christian only realise the truth of our text,—that all the events of life are sent from God, and wisely ordered so as to accomplish, in a way which we may not be able at present to discern, the best and highest ends,—let him only rise to the sublime persuasion that all things do, in point of fact, always work together for good to them that love God and are the called according to his purpose,—and then he stands upon an eminence, where I do not say that he will feel no grief, but where, amidst the varied sorrows which it may be his lot to endure, beams of celestial comfort will never fail to shine in upon his soul.

"Like some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm:
The rolling clouds around its breast are spread;
Eternal sunshine settles on its head."

IV.

TWO SIDES OF A QUESTION, OR RIGHTEOUS OVER-MUCH, AND OVER-MUCH WICKED.

"All things have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness. Be not righteous over-much; neither make thyself over-wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself? Be not over-much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time? It is good that thou shouldest take hold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all."—Eccl. vii. 15–18.

It is a circumstance inseparable from a probationary state like the present, that the degree of outward prosperity which falls to a man's lot does not bear any thing like an exact and invariable correspondence to his character. A time is coming when every one shall receive according to his deeds; but the exact apportionment of recompense, whether it be of glory on the one hand or of shame on the other, is reserved for a future life. Here, for many reasons,—to exercise faith, to teach patience, to subdue corruptions, to wean the heart from sensible things, and to attract it to those which are invisible,—the righteous are often permitted to lie under a load of affliction, while the wicked are allowed to prosper. It could not well be otherwise, in a world where persons of all characters are mixed together, left free agents, and placed under laws which,

while calculated to prove beneficial to the utmost extent upon the whole, could not, without disturbing the frame of human society, be altered to meet particular cases.

Not only do the righteous often suffer, while the wicked prosper, but the very righteousness of the former may be the cause of their suffering, and the wickedness of the latter may be the cause of their prospering. This would be a moral anomaly, admitting of no explanation, on the infidel theory that limits the term of man's existence to the present life, and teaches that God governs the human race only by attaching to their actions the consequences which follow them here. May not true piety involve its possessor in losses, subject him to pain, occasion his death? May not impiety ride triumphant over the arena of time, carrying its head unbent to the last? An element is no doubt present in the case of the good man, and wanting in the case of the bad man, which external fortune cannot affect; I mean, the witness of a good conscience. Still I think that all who will speak candidly must admit that even the throwing of this weighty element into the scale, does not in every case produce the exact apportionment that justice requires, of happiness to the righteous and misery to the wicked; but leaves much, for the adjustment of which we must look to a state of being beyond the tomb.

The fact that righteousness may be the cause of outward ills which wickedness would avert, operates powerfully in drawing individuals into sin; and is often used, by those who would seduce their companions from the path of rectitude, as the fulcrum on which the lever of their persuasion rests. A certain course of conduct may be right, but it has obvious present disadvantages connected with it. We say to ourselves therefore,—or, if we wish to play the part of tempters, we say to others,—"Why be so strict in adhering to what is right, and bring these disadvan-

tages upon our heads? Let us not be too precise, but consult our pleasure a little, though our wheels *should* deviate somewhat from the established tracks of rectitude."

While, however, the administration of God's moral government is unquestionably such as to allow room for the existence of such an inducement to iniquity, it is an inducement founded upon a very partial and shortsighted view of things. If religion have its temporal disadvantages, in how much more awful and certain a sense is this true of irreligion! Is it not matter of daily proof that irreligious courses, free from inconvenience and strewn with pleasures as they may seem at the commencement, lose this character insensibly as they proceed? The flowers soon wither. The sunshine that made every thing seem so gay, changes into gloom and coldness. The soul feels, if it do not give utterance to the melancholy verdict, that "all is vanity and vexation of spirit;" and sorrows upon sorrows, sorrows uncombined with any thing that can mitigate them or give support under them, are discovered,—but alas! too late,—to be the result of a mode of life that once was full of enticement.

Then, with this we must join another idea, namely, that though strict adherence to righteousness may involve us in outward ills, the general tendency of things being otherwise, the good man may, under all his misfortunes, warrantably cherish the hope of a favourable issue to them. There is infinitely more likelihood that his boat, when thrown over among the storms of life and covered with the waters, will right itself again, than there is that such a result will happen in the case of the ungodly man. How often, when iniquity has seemed to triumph for a time, while true religion was trampled in the dust, have the tables (if I may so speak) been in God's providence turned! And even if this should never take place decidedly in this

life, the good man can look forward to that which we have already mentioned as the day of adjustment; the day when the righteous Judge, banishing the ungodly into eternal exclusion from his presence, will say to his people, "Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord."

This very important course of thought is that over which the Preacher takes us in the verses read for exposition this morning: and, having given you in my own words an outline of what is involved in the passage, I now proceed to explain the verses in their order,—a task that will be easier if you have followed me in the remarks that have been made, and observed the bearings and the mutual connection of the ideas brought forward.

I. Ver. 15,—"*All things have I seen in the days of my vanity;*" that is, the following is the result of the observations which I have made during my sojourn in this vain world: "*There is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness.*" The word "perisheth" must be taken in its widest sense, as embracing both great and small calamities; and the meaning is, that a righteous man often suffers loss and hurt, in different degrees, from his adherence to what is right. "*And there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness;*" lives prosperously, and by his very iniquities secures worldly advantage and gratification.

This is what Solomon had observed. It always has been the state of things in time past, and is so as much now as ever. It is not necessary to prove this to any one who has opened his eyes upon the world; but a few illustrations of what the Preacher affirms may serve to place it more vividly before your minds.

My first illustration shall be drawn from the book of Scottish Church History. Think of the time when Scotland groaned under the iron heel of her prelatical persecutors.

The faithful and pious ministers whom the people loved were driven from their pulpits, into which ungodly hirelings were intruded. They were forbidden to preach the Gospel in public buildings, or in the fields, or in private houses; and it was made a crime to wait upon their ministry,—a crime the commission of which was punished in various districts with relentless severity. How many of the holiest inhabitants of the land were ruined by fines, or immured in dungeons!—how many banished from their native shores, their kindred, and all that is commonly held dear!—how many hunted like partridges on the mountains, and compelled to make their homes in caves and concealed places! —how many had their flesh torn, and their limbs racked, by boot and thumbscrew!—how many stained the purple heather with their blood, or gave dignity to the gallows-tree! All these were examples of "a just man perishing in his righteousness." For they might have escaped by an easy step,—a denial of what they believed to be truth,— an acquiescence in the prelatical worship established in the land: but conscience would not permit this, and they suffered, "not accepting deliverance." On the other hand, the converse statement, "There is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness," did not want exemplifications in that eventful era; for not a few procured, not only exemption from suffering, but wealth even, and ease, and high station, and worldly honours, by betraying what was, and what they believed to be, the cause of God.

But let us take another illustration from our own times, and from what is daily occurring in business around us. Two merchants, A and B, start in life with equal capital, equal talents, and prospects of success every way alike. We shall suppose A to be a righteous, God-fearing man, and B to be the reverse. Pursue them in their career. B, uninfluenced by religious principles, adopts every species of deceit and fraud to further his ends, only taking

care, as far as possible, to manage matters so as not to be found out. He adulterates his goods. He passes off an ordinary article, where he has an ignorant customer to deal with, as one of superior quality. He asserts, when there are no means of detecting his falsehood, that in executing an order things have been done which were not done, and charges accordingly. In pressing a sale he allows himself habitually to make statements which he knows to be not according to truth. And if he only tells his lies, and exercises his frauds with dexterity, he may in such a course quickly become rich, and look upon his wealth with high satisfaction, as having been obtained by his own acuteness and wise scheming. On the other hand, A is hindered by religious principle from availing himself of such methods of amassing money. Living in the fear of God, he is not only honest where, if he were otherwise, his fellow-men would detect his dishonesty, and truthful, where falsehood could not be concealed; but in the minutest matters, in transactions where he could sin with the certainty of none being cognizant of his sin but God, he is unswervingly upright. His motto is, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, think on these things." The consequence possibly may be, in certain circumstances, to keep him from becoming rich, or even to involve him in poverty. He may have to pay a price for his integrity, in the want of success altogether, or at least in the want of that measure of success which a little unscrupulousness might have secured. Now, what are the different fortunes of A and B but illustrations of the statement before us? The one gaining riches in the practice of injustice, and the other doomed in consequence of his integrity to struggle with poverty, are probably among the most familiar of those cases on which Solomon had his eye, when he said, "There is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness; and

there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness."

II. The fact being thus certain, that a righteous course of life may be attended with temporal evil, where a wicked course of life would secure temporal advantage, the Preacher proceeds to observe that this fact is often made a motive for not being very strict or precise. Verse 16,— "*Be not righteous over-much, neither make thyself over-wise; for why shouldest thou destroy thyself?*"

I daresay some of you may have heard these words quoted at times, as if they were condemnatory of earnestness in religion. It has been said, "Scripture itself directs us not to be righteous over-much; therefore one should not be too frequent in religious duties, or make pretensions to too great holiness." But you will perceive from the connection that the words in question, though occurring in Scripture, express not the mind of the Spirit of inspiration, but the sentiments of an ungodly man who is introduced as founding an argument against what he considers excessive precision, on the fact that such precision will deprive you of certain temporal advantages which you might gain, if you could only denude yourselves of it.

To illustrate the statement considered in this its true aspect, I shall suppose the case of a young man religiously brought up, who quits the parental roof, and goes out into the world, where he is left entirely to himself; perhaps goes, as not a few before me have done, to a distant country, where no one is near to exercise supervision over him, or to aid him with friendly and pious counsel. Thus cast upon the ocean of life, he meets with many whose influence, more or less directly exerted, is of a kind fitted to lead him astray. But the principles instilled into his mind at a mother's knee, or from the lips of a beloved father, do not at once lose their force. He cannot

at once go into the ways of the ungodly companions with whom he has come in contact; and this leads them to ridicule his strictness, and to rally him upon the folly of depriving himself of enjoyment by being over-scrupulous. He hesitates to spend his Sabbaths with them in idleness or worldly amusement; he has strong convictions of the sinfulness of gambling, and of frequenting theatres and places of amusement of a similar character; he is satisfied of the heinousness of the sin of drunkenness, and feels a moral shrinking from the dissipation which he witnesses. All this, they tell him, is an excess of religion. You will not take a drive into the country for a little pleasure on the Sabbath day! You will rather sit moping in the house, reading the Bible, or go to church! How dull! "Be not righteous over-much, neither make thyself over-wise; why shouldest thou destroy thyself?" You will not have a game at cards, for such trifling stakes as we play for! you think it wrong! Indeed! How precise your notions are! You will not go to the theatre! you think the influence of theatrical representations decidedly and hopelessly bad! Surely you are too straitlaced! You will not drink any more! Why you have scarcely taken any thing yet. We are merely beginning. Come, do not spoil our sociality. No? You will not? O, put away your scruples. There is no harm in it, but on the contrary a vast deal of pleasure, of which you will be a fool to deprive yourself. "Be not," therefore, "righteous over-much, neither make thyself over-wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself?"

Take, again, an illustration from actual history; that afforded by Margaret Wilson,* one of those Scottish martyrs of whom I previously spoke. Two stakes were fixed within high-water-mark of the Solway; and Margaret, a young person, eighteen years of age, whose parents were

* See M'Crie's "Sketches of Scottish Church History."

both conformists to prelacy, but who had herself imbibed better principles, along with an old woman of sixty-three, who had been guilty of the same crime (that of thinking and acting for herself in matters of religion, and refusing to hear the ungodly curates), were tied to the stakes, and left to be drowned on the advance of the sea. Margaret's relations used all their persuasions to get her to abjure what she considered the truth, by doing which, even at the last hour, she might have saved her life. The old woman being farthest out was drowned in her sight; and still she remained firm. At last the advancing waters covered her too; but ere the vital spark was gone, she was drawn up till she recovered the power of speech, and offered her life if she would yet take the oath her persecutors required. I doubt not those around, who had not her strong religious convictions, thought it strange she should hesitate. I doubt not that their sentiments, if not their words, were, "Be not righteous over-much, neither make thyself overwise; why shouldest thou destroy thyself?" But integrity was dearer to her than life, and therefore she replied,—"I will not; I am one of Christ's children; let me go:" and the waters covered her for ever.

III. The Preacher, however, proceeds to intimate that, while the administration of God's moral government here is unquestionably such as to leave room for the existence of the argument on the side of iniquity, to which I have referred, there is AN OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE QUESTION. Verse 17,—"*Be not over-much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time?*" In other words, religion may have its temporal disadvantages, but in how much more awful a sense is this true of irreligion! Persons are very easily induced to think it a hardship to make the sacrifices which a strict adherence to the commandments of God would entail; but it would be

well if they were more disposed to ponder the calamities to which the least departure from these commandments may insensibly conduct. For what community, what hamlet, what circle of acquaintances, however small, has not its instances, terrible and impressive, of the truth that even in this world "the wages of sin is death"?

Here I shall select for illustration one sin in particular,—the grand Goliath sin of intemperance; a sin which perhaps more palpably, though not more truly, than any other exemplifies the statement before us. You know what are called dissolving views, where, as you contemplate a picture, it gradually changes,—the lights and shadows vary,—one feature melts away before your eyes and gives place to another, till the whole is completely altered. Now, if it were possible to have a series of such views, in which the different stages of a drunkard's career were faithfully pictured,—his original unblighted condition undergoing successive transformations, each showing him more sunk and wretched than the preceding,—if you could see him at first in all the freshness and vigour of youth, respected, trusted, and beloved,—if you could see him at a subsequent period, not yet altogether gone, but on the edge of the rapids, his health beginning to suffer, his attention to business relaxing, the confidence of his employers diminishing, his amiability already giving place to qualities of an unhappy and repulsive kind,—if you could see him at a point still lower, his constitution now seriously shattered, and his worldly prospects blasted,—if you could see him trusted, respected, loved no longer, and yet clinging with maniac fondness to the vice which had brought him thus low,—if, finally, you could see him in the last stage, only not an object of unmingled detestation, because he is to every right-minded person an object of such deep pity; the emaciated victim of disease grown too strong to be controlled by any skill, trembling in the grasp of a ter-

rible delirium, going down to a premature, dishonoured, and (above all) hopeless grave;—if you could see all this, how loud the voice with which it would warn you against dallying with the destroyer! How impressive the commentary it would afford on the admonition of the Preacher, "Be not over-much wicked, neither be thou foolish; why shouldest thou die before thy time?"

I read lately a biographical account of one of the most distinguished periodical writers of the present century, not many years since gone to his account, which is so much to the purpose here, that I may refer to it. The account is written by a very partial hand, so that there is no doubt that the melancholy features of the case are not exaggerated. I quote the language of the biographer:—"Crossed, and darkened, and embittered by clouds was his career while he lived. Sorrow had cast her shadow over his soul. Poverty and neglect lay upon him like an eclipse. The hope which, in the morning of his manhood, rose resplendently in the distance, and cast around his path imaginary triumphs, trophies, and applause, had disappeared as he proceeded: and like the mirage of the desert left only wretchedness and disappointment. One by one, he had observed those who commenced life with knowledge and intellect far inferior to his own, with prospects less brilliant and recommendations less powerful, outstrip him in the race, and bear away the honours and rewards, while to him there fell only a scanty apportionment of either. His heart had begun to grow old and weary of the world; and that innate sunshine of the mind, which had never deserted him, but was present even in the gloomiest circumstances, scarcely supported him amidst the many troubles that sprang up like tempests in his path."* What was the explanation of all this? Mainly intemperance. In many a sparkling song, the distinguished indi-

* See the "Dublin University Magazine," January 1844.

vidual to whom I refer had celebrated the pleasures of wine and jovial companionship, and darted the arrows of his singularly brilliant wit against sobriety and moderation; and if, in the season of his glory, when the tide of his spirits was at its height, any one had presumed to hint to him the sin of the course he was pursuing, he would probably have answered in scorn, "Be not righteous overmuch, neither make thyself over-wise; why shouldest thou destroy thyself?" But what was the end? O! was there no warning spirit from heaven, to predict to him, in secret whispers, a day when friends should forsake him,—when he should be cast into a gaol,—when, in utter want, and worn to a skeleton by a consumption which his own excesses had hastened, if not produced, he should close his eyes miserably upon a world through which he had once deemed that he ~~had~~ should run so happy a course!

The principle involved in these remarks you will have no difficulty in applying to other ungodly courses of conduct, without my specifying such particularly. Therefore, when wicked men think or speak of the loss of pleasure, and the like, attending a life of strict religion; we are able, if we can do nothing more, to point them at all events to the opposite side of the picture. If the outward ills resulting from adherence to the commandments of God —and let it not be forgotten, in passing, that these ills are blessings in disguise, being invariably overruled, in God's providence, for the benefit of the pious sufferer—but, omitting this, looking at them as real and uncompensated ills,—if they, I say, are counted by tens, there are evils attending ungodliness too, which must be counted by thousands. The former, compared with the latter, are but as molehills beside the Alps. You cannot, my friends, if you wish to be happy, be too scrupulous in regard to any thing that conscience bids you shrink from. Once begin to deviate from the commandments of God, and who can

predict the depth of starless gloom and misery to which the course on which you thus enter may, even here, lead? I state no fiction, I state nothing but what every one hearing me knows to be the fact, that many, many who once occupied a respectable station, and would have shuddered,—I should rather say, would have smiled incredulously,—at the idea of their being reckoned among the outcasts of society, have, like persons entering a stream which by degrees carries them down rapidly and more rapidly towards the gulf of ruin, begun with little sins, and been drawn on from bad to worse, till at length those who ask what has become of them, are directed to the hovels, full of squalor and wretchedness, where the most degraded and helpless of mankind are congregated; or to the festering wards of some hospital; or to the cold, bare, iron-bolted cells of a prison; or to a penal settlement far away; or to an obscure and untimely grave.

IV. This, however, brings me to the last thought in the text, namely, that whatever be the calamities which a just man suffers in his righteousness, he has always a ground of hope and a source of comfort. Verse 18, "*It is good that thou shouldest take hold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand,*"—in other words, be firmly convinced of this which I am now about to state,—"*for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all.*" Called though the godly man may be to suffer, there shall be a triumphant and happy issue to his calamities.

And is not this, in point of fact, often the case even in this world? In matters of business, for example, every one is aware of the force of the familiar proverb, that "honesty is the best policy." Honesty may deprive you, in particular cases, of wealth which you could gain if you were choosing to be dishonest; but, as a general rule, the honest man wins the day in the end. And so in every

other case. "He that feareth God shall come forth of them all." As a general rule, to live in the fear of God and in strict obedience to his commandments, though it may infer present sacrifice and self-denial, is the way to lead to happiness and prosperity in the long run,—a happiness and prosperity real, solid, and attended with that peace of conscience without which the proudest diadem would be no better than a band of burning iron around the brow.

A singularly beautiful example of this occurs in that sweetest of all histories, the history of Joseph. If we look only at the earlier part of his life,—if we see him narrowly escaping death at the hands of his inhuman brethren, cast into the pit, sold to the Ishmaelites, a slave in the house of Potiphar, a captive in the dungeon,—a painful feeling is apt to be awakened, having its expression in the words of the verse we first considered, "There is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness." But if we look to the last part of the history of the same lovely saint,—if we look at him taken from the dungeon, advanced to the second place in the land of Egypt, all but adored by the Egyptians, the saviour and benefactor of the brethren who had so ill treated him, the comforter of his father's old age, —we will then be constrained to change our language, and to say, "He that feareth God shall come forth of them all."

Of course, however, it must be granted that such a happy issue to a good man's troubles does not always take place on earth. Witness the case of the innumerable company of martyrs who have perished at the stake. Still, even in such an instance, and in others, where, to the last, righteousness appears crushed and bleeding in this world, it may be said that "he that feareth God shall come forth of them all." For the heavenly rewards, into the enjoyment of which he enters, when sorrow has done its worst upon him here below, must not be forgotten. Oh, when a

truly godly man, who has preserved his integrity amid many temptations, and has suffered for so doing,—suffered, without obtaining relief or remedy of an outward kind, to the last hour of his life,—closes his eyes upon this terrestrial scene, where his lot has been so hard, and opens them amid the glories of the land where sin and sorrow are unknown,—where the "wicked cease from troubling and the weary be at rest,"—he will then know, if ever he doubted it previously, he will know so as to have a doubt about the matter no longer, the truth of the statement, "He that feareth God shall come forth of them all!"

V.

THE TRAITOR UNMASKED, OR INCIDENTS OF OUR LORD'S LAST PASSOVER.

"When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, That one of you shall betray me," &c.—JOHN xiii. 21–38.

THE circumstances which this passage narrates, and of which I propose to take a review, occurred at Jerusalem, in the upper room whither our Lord had gone with his twelve disciples to eat the passover before his death. Judas, who had already covenanted with the chief priests to betray Jesus to them for thirty pieces of silver, was present among the other apostles; having, according to wonted practice, joined them, under the impression that his treachery was undiscovered, and apparently with the purpose at once of preventing suspicion and of obtaining the information that might best enable him to execute his nefarious designs. Strange infatuation! as if Jesus had not given frequent and incontestable proof that "he knew what was in man." The passage shows how the traitor was unmasked, and presents to our contemplation a beautiful and touching scene, which succeeded his withdrawal from the supper chamber.

You are to suppose that the paschal meal is ended. The feet of the disciples have been washed; and our Lord,

after inculcating by this symbolical action, the needful lesson of humility and holiness, has resumed his place at table. Then, having addressed the twelve as his servants who were to go forth in his name to their fellow-men, he has just added,—as the first advance towards the unveiling of Judas,—a mysterious hint of treachery: "I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me." At this point our exposition commences.

VER. 21.—"When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, That one of you shall betray me."

The mysterious words previously quoted, "I speak not of you all," would doubtless fill the disciples with amazement; and they would fix their eyes inquiringly upon Jesus,—What do we hear? Are we to understand that any of our number can possibly prove treacherous? Speak, Lord, and tell us that we are mistaken, or have misinterpreted your words. One only of the company would not share such feelings. Jesus, on his part, was unable to suppress his emotions. He was *troubled in spirit*, visibly agitated. To his sensitive human breast, it was painful to be obliged to make the declaration. Yet, for what he had in view, it was necessary that it should be made. He, therefore, announced explicitly (keen as was the pang which he felt in doing so) that one of those at table should betray him.

Why did he make this announcement? One reason was, that when the event came to pass, according to his prediction, the faith of the disciples might be confirmed. But he had, besides, an immediate and more profound design, the perception of which is indispensable to the understanding of what follows. This was the last occasion on which he was to be with his disciples before his death.

He wished to improve it to their best advantage. He wished to speak to them freely, pouring out the immeasurable fulness of his affection towards them. He wished to minister to them, bereaved of his presence as they were about to be, tender consolations adapted to their circumstances. But this was impossible while Judas was a listener. Suppose that one of ourselves is desirous of giving forth, to friends whom he loves, the warmest expressions of his attachment, he is unable to do this while some indifferent stranger, much more a malignant enemy, is present. He must wait till such parties are gone. So Jesus, who was in all things made like unto his brethren, only without sin, could not lay bare the core of his heart to the disciples whom he loved, till the traitor was removed. But how was the removal of Judas to be effected? Thus: Let him understand that his treachery is known, and he will of his own accord hasten to withdraw. At the same time, our Lord had no wish to unmask Judas before the whole company of the apostles. He merely wished that Judas should himself feel that he was known; and, therefore, he expressed the melancholy deed that was about to be perpetrated, without designating the actor by name, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, That one of you shall betray me."

VER. 22.—"Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake;"

altogether at a loss who was intended. Nothing however was learned from the glances thus mutually exchanged.

VER. 23.—"Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved."

This was John, the writer of the Gospel before us, who modestly suppresses his name. The Jews in their entertainments reclined upon couches, the most favoured guest at a feast occupying the place next the master of the house. In the social intercourse of Jesus with his disciples, this

place was usually (at any rate it was on the present occasion) filled by John; and, reclining on the same couch with Jesus, next our Lord, his head was brought into close proximity with the bosom of the Saviour. This is what is meant by the expression, *leaning on Jesus' bosom.*

VER. 24.—"Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake."

This must be understood to have taken place *aside.* It was what may be termed a piece of by-play. Peter,—unable to endure suspense,—wishing, with the impatience natural to his character, to know the whole at once, beckoned to the beloved disciple to ask Jesus *softly,* as his position enabled him to do, who was the person to whom he referred. The sign made by Peter was not such as to attract the notice of the whole company, but was private, meant for the eye of John alone. What followed?

VER. 25.—"He then, lying on Jesus' breast, saith unto him, Lord, who is it?"

I have two things here to remark. The one is, that John's question was not put aloud, but in a suppressed tone. The other is, that the word *lying* is not the same with the word *leaning* in the twenty-third verse. It is different in the original Scriptures as well as in our version; and the thing intended is different. It describes the motion of John's body, as he inclined himself towards our Lord for the purpose of whispering the inquiry in his ear. The matter took place thus:—On being beckoned to by Peter, John, who occupied a position at table such that his head was in close proximity to the bosom of the Saviour, inclined himself nearer to our Lord; and familiarly (yet, we doubt not, with reverential familiarity) asked, in a low, soft voice, inaudible to any besides, "Lord, who is it?"

VER. 26.—"Jesus answered" (of course in a whisper likewise), "He it is to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon."

It seems apparent from the whole story,—and the fact will presently receive incontrovertible proof,—that John's question, and the answer of our Lord, were neither of them spoken aloud, but that all that passed was in an under tone between the two. With regard to the *sop*, that was simply a portion of food. It was the part of him who presided at table to distribute portions of food to the different guests. The circumstance, therefore, of a sop being given to Judas was nothing singular, nor was it calculated in the least degree to excite suspicion with regard to him.

VER. 27.—"And after the sop Satan entered into him."

Scripture informs us that Satan has, in some manner, access to our hearts, and is constantly endeavouring to seduce us into sin. Our wills, however, as rational agents, are left free. It remains with us to comply with his solicitations, or to reject them. Now, there are few things, if any, which lead a man to surrender himself so entirely to evil influences as the consciousness of detected guilt. In the mind of one who is meditating some scheme of nefarious wickedness, there will oftentimes long remain a reluctance to strike the blow which will perfect his intended crime,—a hesitancy to take the step, after which there can be no retreat. But, amidst such indecision, let him be aware that his villany has been detected, and the consciousness of this will drive him to the last extremities. So it was with Judas. Guilt is quick-eyed; and I suppose that while the rest of the company were looking in perplexity on one another, Judas would observe Peter beckoning to John. At all events, on the watch, as he would be, to find indications of the extent to which his designs were ascertained, he would be certain to observe John whispering in the Saviour's ear,—and then the Saviour whispering something in reply,—and then the dipping of the sop, and the handing of it to him,—succeeded by the serious regard of Jesus, and by the shuddering gaze of the other,—and

then he would be aware that the whole was certainly known. With that conviction, he would abandon himself completely to the influence of the tempter. This I take to be the force of the expression, "After the sop, Satan entered into him." The certainty that he was discovered stirred up within him every fiendish passion. Hitherto there might have been a struggle in his soul,—a question, Shall I do the deed, or yet draw back? But now the last thought of irresolution is banished, the last remonstrance of conscience is suppressed, and THE DEVIL is in full and undivided possession of the unhappy man.

"Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly:"

—words not, of course, inciting Judas to the perpetration of his intended treachery, but rather calculated to make him reflect upon the awful nature and consequences of the act;—"If you are bent upon the commission of such wickedness,—if nothing will restrain you,—if you will not, even at this last moment, be warned,—go, and accomplish your design."

The 28th and 29th verses are worthy of attention, as proving the correctness of the view we have expressed, that Judas was not marked out as the traitor before the whole company.

VER. 28, 29.—"Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor."

It is not necessary to interpret the words "no man" with perfect literalness. John would understand the purport of our Lord's observation, and probably Peter likewise; but the disciples generally were ignorant of its meaning. This could not have been the case had the circumstances previously recorded been performed in an open and public manner. The fact that none except John, and perhaps Peter, knew what our Lord meant when he said, "That thou doest, do quickly," shows that none except these two

were privy to what was implied in the giving of the sop. The disciples, in their conjectures as to the meaning of their Master's words, could not possibly have supposed,—had they heard Judas indicated as the traitor a moment before,—either that directions were given to him to purchase provisions for the feast, or that he was instructed to distribute alms to the poor. The traitor himself, however, being made conscious that he was fully seen through, could no longer remain in the company.

VER. 30.—"He then, having received the sop, went immediately out; and it was night."

—"He separated himself," as one has finely expressed it, "from the circle of humility and love, and through the lonesome darkness hastened to the enemies of Jesus."

Thus the immediate object with which the intimation was made to the twelve, of the existence of treachery within the camp, is gained. JUDAS HAS WITHDRAWN; and our Lord, left alone with the friends who have been faithful to him in all his temptations, can address them without restraint. He can speak to them with a tender affection, the fulness and freedom of whose outpourings are not prevented by the consciousness that even one individual present is hostile or indifferent.

VER. 31.—"Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him."

"WHEN HE WAS GONE OUT!" Nothing could be done till Judas had retired. So long as he was present, there was an obstacle in the way,—there was a seal upon the heart of Jesus; but by his withdrawal, the obstacle is removed, the seal is broken, and the waters immediately begin to gush forth.—"*Now is the Son of man glorified.*" These words refer to our Lord's approaching decease, and to the glory that was to follow. They may be regarded as having respect partly to his decease itself; for Jesus was glorified even in his death. To the eye of sense, indeed,

it was an ignominious thing to hang upon a cross, and to be an all but universal object of taunts and revilings; but this outward shame was infinitely more than counterbalanced by the glory of bruising the head of Satan, and bringing to a successful completion the great work for which he had come down from heaven to earth. But our Lord's words must also be considered as pointing to the exaltation at the right hand of the Majesty on high, to which his decease immediately led. The throne of mediatorial dominion was but a step beyond the cross; and the two objects—the cross and the throne—were on this, as on other occasions, contemplated by the Saviour in the same glance, as inseparable parts of one whole. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?"—"*And God is glorified in him.*" This refers to the illustration of the various perfections of the divine nature which was afforded in the cross of Christ. What Christ underwent, when he "gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour," was the most striking manifestation which the universe ever witnessed of the holiness of the Most High. It proved God to be absolutely and inflexibly just. It rendered universally conspicuous the breadth, the grandeur, and the steadfastness of the pillars on which his government rests. It wonderfully displayed "the riches both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God;" and it revealed that quality of mercy which, but for the death of Christ, must (as far as we can perceive) have remained for ever latent in the divine breast, unexercised, unadored. It blazoned forth in light, which streamed throughout the bounds of creation and awakened new emotions in all holy intelligent beings, the discovery that GOD IS LOVE.*

* Further illustrations of this point will be found in the sermon in this volume entitled "The Mirror;" and also in that upon the text, "Howbeit, we speak wisdom among them that are perfect."

VER. 32.—"If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him, in," or with, "himself, and shall straightway glorify him."

Since, in the atoning death of Jesus, so signal an illustration was to be given of the holiness, justice, wisdom, and mercy of God, it is intimated that the Father should reward the Saviour's obedience by "raising him from the dead, and setting him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." Nor should this take place at a distant period. The time was at hand. All was to be accomplished *straightway*, as our Lord announced again at a later hour of the evening in his intercessory prayer, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

From the above remote and general intimation regarding his death,—in which, out of delicate regard for the feelings of the disciples, Jesus had directed attention, not so much to the naked fact of his departure, as to the glory with which his crucifixion should be associated, and by which it should be succeeded,—he proceeds to be somewhat more specific; yet his language is still gently suggestive rather than abruptly plain.

VER. 33.—"Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you."

How pathetic the address! "*Little children!*" It seems as if we were listening to a dying parent who has gathered his family around his bed, and is bidding them farewell. "*Yet a little while I am with you.*" I am about to leave you. You soon shall see my face no more. This was not the first occasion on which our Lord had alluded to his death, though the disciples were so little expecting that event,

that he was obliged to break it to them as if it were wholly a new subject. When on his way to this very passover, he had said to the twelve, in express terms, "Behold we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles, and they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him." And not long before, he had said publicly to the Jewish people, "I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come." It was, therefore, no new thing which he was now bringing forward. The approaching separation, to which he was desirous of reconciling the minds of the disciples, had not come upon him as a sudden and unexpected necessity. It had been contemplated by him as inevitable from the beginning. It was important that the disciples should feel this; and therefore our Lord refers to the announcement he had made to the Jews: only, we may observe, in quoting what he had then said, he drops the condemnatory phrase, "Ye shall die in your sins," which had been elicited by the unbelief of the Jews, but would not have been applicable to his genuine disciples. An exhortation to the eleven, instructing them how to conduct themselves when he should be gone, follows:—

VER. 34.—"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another."

My parting injunction, my dying entreaty is, that you live together in mutual love. Let there be no breach of affection, no sinful emulations, no jarrings or strivings among you.

"As I have loved you, that ye also love one another."

Here, as in every thing else, Christ is our bright exemplar. How ineffable was the affection which he manifested towards the members of his body, in becoming incarnate for their redemption; in submitting to every form of pain and

shame, enduring the reproaches of wicked men, the assaults of Satan, and the hidings of his Father's countenance, as their surety; in bearing their sins in his own body on the tree, and shedding his precious blood in their room! And how powerful the appeal, founded upon this affection, which Christ makes to his followers, to cherish a corresponding love to one another! "Hereby," writes the apostle John, in words which are a direct commentary on those before us, "perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." This is termed "*a new commandment.*" It certainly was in one sense old, having been from the beginning: yet since the example of Christ put the duty in a new and striking light; and since the Gospel presents motives to brotherly love which were less clearly and fully apprehended under the former dispensation; and since the influence of the Holy Ghost, from which love originates, was destined to be more largely communicated after our Lord's ascension than before,—on these accounts the injunction to love one another would have, to the people of God, from this time forth, a meaning which it never previously possessed.

VER. 35.—"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

Brotherly love, which Christ in the previous verse inculcates as his dying command, and recommends by his own example, he here speaks of as the mark by which his people should be distinguished and known; and that it is a true mark of genuine Christianity can easily be made to appear. For "love is of God;" it is an effect of divine influence, one of the fruits of the Spirit. The flame of brotherly affection is not of the earth, earthy; it is kindled from above. The want of love to any who give evidence of being Christ's people would prove that we could recognise the image of the Saviour without admiring it; while, on

the contrary, if we love believers "with a pure heart fervently," we show that we enter into the sympathies of Christ, that we appreciate the characters on which he looks with complacency, and that our affections flow out towards the same objects with his. Our love to the people of Christ is an index to point out the degree of our regard to the Saviour himself, for Christ identifies himself with his people: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." Should persons professing to belong to a peculiar spiritual family, all the members of which, redeemed with the blood of the Son of God, and made subjects of the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost, are looking forward to a residence throughout eternity in the same blissful celestial home—should such persons manifest no mutual attachment more than common, but exhibit jealousy, mistrust, and dislike of one another; should there be among them just as much of "bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, and malice," as there is among those who make no religious profession,—how grossly inconsistent, as well as injurious to the Redeemer's cause, would be their conduct! But if professing Christians "walk in love, as Christ also loved them;" if they are "kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven them;" if they habitually demean themselves "with lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,"—they will thus evince both that there is a power in the Gospel to sweeten and beautify character, and that they personally have experienced that power.

We have seen that through tender consideration for the feelings of the disciples, our Lord had not bluntly, and in so many words, declared that his life was about to be taken

away. He had contented himself with speaking suggestively. He was about to be glorified. He was to remain with them but a little while longer. He was to go whither they could not come. When he was gone, they were to be sure to live together in love. This is all exceedingly plain to us; but the disciples, blinded by prejudice, did not even yet see what he was pointing at. They were bewildered; and Peter, ever foremost, resolved to ask for more definite information.

VER. 36.—"Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou?"

You will recollect that when Christ spoke to the Jews about going whither they could not come, they mocked him. "Whither will he go that we shall not find him? Will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?" Now it seems likely that Peter had taken up some such idea as the Jews had mockingly cast out. He appeared to have fancied that when Jesus spoke of leaving his disciples, he had it in his mind to quit Judea, where he had met with such an unworthy reception, and to set up his kingdom elsewhere. "*Lord, whither goest thou?*" To what country do you purpose to depart?

"Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards."

There is one striking point of difference between what had been said to the Jews, and what is here said to Peter. To them our Lord's words had been, "Whither I go ye cannot come," accompanied (as we have seen above) with these other words, indicative of the perpetual separation of the parties addressed from Christ, "Ye shall die in your sins." From the heaven to which he was about to ascend, they, in consequence of their impenitence and unbelief, were doomed to everlasting banishment. Against them the gates of that paradise of unmingled and eternal bliss to which he was about to wing his way were hopelessly closed. But to Peter he says, "Thou canst not follow me

now." You have still a season to spend on earth. You have a work to do here, before receiving your reward. But "thou shalt follow me *afterwards.*" In due time you shall join me in the paradise of God.

It may seem strange to us that Peter should not now at least have apprehended our Lord's meaning; but he was still in the dark.

VER. 37.—"Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now?"

It is not difficult to read the feelings of this ardent and impetuous disciple, as reflected in this new inquiry. His mind was still running on the idea that Jesus was about to quit Judea for some foreign land where he would meet with a more becoming reception than his own countrymen had given him, and to lay the foundations of his kingdom there. It seemed to him that Jesus distrusted the constancy or attachment of the disciples, or was unwilling to expose them to the difficulties and peril which would necessarily accompany the erection of his standard,—for, be it remembered, the kingdom of the Messiah was imagined by Peter and his companions to be, in part at least, a temporal one. He understood Jesus to say that, in the first instance, he would go forth alone; struggle with the difficulties, and face the hazards of the enterprise, by himself; and then—when obstacles had been smoothed away, and dangers removed—when success began to attend his efforts, and the rewards were to be reaped—he would send for the disciples who had left their earthly all at his bidding, and associate them with himself. Though he should go alone in the first instance, yet he would call them to join him afterwards. Peter's generous mind feels reproached—I had almost said, fires—at the idea that Jesus could think so meanly of him.

VER. 37.—"Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now?"

Do you suppose that I would be deterred by difficulty—

that I would shrink from peril? Do you deem so unworthily of me as to suppose that there is any thing which I would not do or endure, under thy direction, and in thy cause?

"I will lay down my life for thy sake."

Bravely spoken! and without doubt sincerely too; but spoken with presumptuous self-confidence. Peter had yet to learn his own weakness—to learn how quickly the best resolutions give way before temptation, when reliance is not exercised on Him who alone can keep from falling.

VER. 38.—"Jesus" (who knew his affectionate but hasty disciple better than he knew himself) "answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice."

At these words, it would seem, silence filled the room; and the true import of the Saviour's previous suggestions began to break upon the minds of the disciples. Danger is referred to; and not remote, but close at hand; so formidable that he who was esteemed the boldest of their number should, before morning, thrice deny the Lord for whom he now professes himself willing to shed his blood. What can this mean? Is that departure of which Jesus speaks a departure by death? He *did* tell us that he should be delivered into the hands of the chief priests, and that they should kill him; words which were unintelligible to us. Is this literally to take place? and is the catastrophe on the eve of happening? Methinks that thus the truth would at last force itself upon the minds of the eleven; and if so, their agitation and distress may be conceived. Is He to be overwhelmed by the enmity of the Jewish people on whom we have fixed our hopes as the Redeemer of Israel? Is the confidence we have cherished in him as the Messiah, and which has been confirmed by miracles of the most stupendous kind, as well as by discourses such as man never spake, vain? Is our expectation of beholding him seated on the throne of his father David, to perish in

a night, like Jonah's gourd? Have we left all to follow him, thinking him the Christ; and is this to be the end? And what will become of us when he is gone? Should he bequeath his cause to us after his departure, as his language implies, how shall we be able to maintain it, amidst the opposition of enemies so powerful as those with whom we shall have to contend? Had HE continued with us, to comfort us by his exhortations, to direct us by his wisdom, and to defend us by his power, we should have dreaded no opposition, however great. But what shall we do, begirt with enemies, when the Leader to whom we have been wont to look is no longer at our head? What shall we do, left in the dark night, upon so tempestuous an ocean, when the pilot has been removed from the helm? And now the circle sit in dumb perplexity. Sadness is on every countenance; when the voice of Jesus is again heard, LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED: YE BELIEVE IN GOD, BELIEVE ALSO IN ME.

The passage which we have thus endeavoured to expound, abounds in matter for practical improvement; and before closing, I shall notice a few of the points which most forcibly suggest themselves.

1. First of all, *the case of the traitor conveys an awful admonition to hypocritical professors of religion.* It is to be feared that every church contains a considerable proportion of members who, like Judas, profess indeed to follow Christ; but are utterly without love to him, or regard for any thing except the world. I doubt not that there are some such present with us this day, contemplating an approach to the communion table;* and I desire to address them with all plainness. Your case, my friends, is precisely similar to that of the unhappy man whose treachery we

* This discourse was preached as an Action Sermon, previous to the dispensation of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

have had under consideration. You perhaps think of him as a monster of impiety and wickedness; and so he was. But where is the radical difference betwixt him and yourselves? He called Christ, Lord, Lord, while he had no attachment to the Saviour in his heart; so do you. He used religion solely as a means to further his worldly purposes; so do you. A bribe of thirty pieces of silver led him to betray his Master with a kiss; and I presume your consciences tell you that for the world and the things that are in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, you likewise, in certain circumstances, would without doubt barter your profession and all that is most sacred. The outward crime that has stamped perpetual infamy on his name, may be conceded to stand alone, unparalleled in enormity: but it is difficult to understand wherein essentially your character differs from his. And as all hypocritical professors of religion rank in the same category with Judas as to character, so they shall be joined with him in his doom. Ah! the heart trembles to think of this. "Good were it for that man, if he had never been born." Where is he now? He has gone to "his own place." His portion is in "everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." How poor a bargain he made! Had he gained the whole world by his hypocrisy and betrayal of Jesus, what would it have availed him now, where he is denied a drop of water to cool his tongue? As certainly as there is truth in the Bible, this lot shall be yours too, should death (which may come at any time) find you mere nominal, hypocritical adherents of Christ, seeking to deceive others—if you are not deceiving yourselves also—by a profession of Christianity based upon mere worldly considerations. Picture to your minds the difference between the present condition of the traitor, and that of the eleven with whom he was associated in the apostleship. *They* are with Christ; enjoying a holier, a closer, a tenderer,

a more delightful intercourse with him than ever they did, even in those moments of his earthly history in which he opened his heart most fully to them. They are with him, beholding his glory which his Father has given him, and participating in that glory. Their anxieties, their fears, their sorrows are over. *He* is where Christ's gracious presence is unknown—where one ray of the light of Christ's countenance never breaks the utter gloom—where one tone from the harp of joy never sounds—where all is misery, deep, unchanging, endless misery—where (to use our Saviour's own language) "the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." We say again, he made a poor bargain when he sold Christ for the world; and we again warn you against continuing to follow his example. A nominal profession of religion avails you nothing: nay, it only adds to your guilt. If there be any difference between the false professor and the open and avowed scoffer, it is only that the former is worse, and merits and shall receive a heavier condemnation than the latter.

2. In the second place, *the view which the passage under consideration gives of the agency of Satan in tempting to sin should be felt as a powerful inducement to watchfulness and prayer.* Numberless other Scriptures confirm the fact brought out in the text, that Satan has access in some way to our spirits, and is continually using all his craft and power to entice us into iniquity. Fallen himself by his rebellion against God, exiled from the heaven where his dwelling-place once was, and deprived of the favour of Jehovah, that Evil One, as if it would lessen his own pangs to have others partakers of his misery, or render the flames of hell less awful to see the members of another family plunged in them, labours with unceasing activity to ruin the souls of men. He "beguiled Eve through his subtilty." He succeeded in compassing the final perdition of Judas. He well-nigh succeeded with Peter

too: but the grace of Christ here delivered the prey from the mighty. "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Now, what effect should our knowledge of the existence of this crafty and malignant tempter have upon us? It should put us on our guard, like soldiers who are conscious of a dangerous enemy in their neighbourhood. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." We cannot, indeed, distinguish the suggestions of Satan from the working of our own faculties, and, therefore, can only watch against him by keeping watch over the emotions of our own hearts; but when we are aware that he is ever at hand to prompt to evil thoughts and feelings, ever near to blow with his fiendish breath the slightest spark of unhallowed affection into a flame, we fail in spiritual prudence if this does not come home to us as an additional reason to all the others which exist why we should be peculiarly circumspect, and should cherish a habitual frame of prayerful reliance on Him whose grace alone can preserve us from falling.

3. In the third place, *what an encouragement does this passage furnish to sinners to put their trust in Christ!* God was glorified in him. He fully satisfied divine justice. He magnified the law and made it honourable; so that, on the footing of his finished work, God can pardon sinners, and bestow upon them the blessings of eternal life, without a shadow falling upon any of the perfections of his nature, or the slightest injury being done to his moral government. No sacrifice less than the blood of Emmanuel could have sufficed to take away sin; but this infinitely precious offering has been made, and every sinner, however guilty, who puts his trust in Christ, is assured, on the word of Him who cannot lie, of obtaining

forgiveness, sanctification, peace, and complete redemption. The invitation, addressed to every creature under heaven, is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Let me urge this upon unconverted sinners. It is my duty, brethren, as a minister of Christ, to use every persuasion in my power to induce you to avail yourselves of the rich provision of saving mercies brought to your hand in the Gospel; and this I would discharge, not merely as a duty, but in a spirit of friendly affection, and out of love to your immortal souls. AS THOUGH GOD DID BESEECH YOU BY US, WE PRAY YOU IN CHRIST'S STEAD, BE YE RECONCILED TO GOD. By the infinite mercy of the Father, as manifested in the formation of the scheme of redemption; by the all-sufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ offered in our room and stead; by the love of the Spirit striving within your hearts, I pray you to be reconciled to God! By a consideration of the value of your own souls, and the immensity of the interests at stake; by any desire which you may have to escape the never-ending woes of hell, and to be admitted to a share in the joys of heaven, I call upon you to be reconciled to God! The means of reconciliation have been provided: all things are ready: it only remains that you cast down the weapons of your rebellion, lay aside the enmity of your hearts to God, and close by faith with his gracious overtures. Believe it to be "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Believe the "record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son." Place your confidence in Christ, and in those promises of God which "in him are yea, and in him Amen." And then, "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

4. In the fourth place, *we have in the passage before us*

(as brought out in the previous part of the discourse) *a test by which to try the genuineness of our faith.* "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." The question, Do we love the brethren? is peculiarly suitable, my friends, to the circumstances in which we are this day met together. In the sacrament of the supper, which we are about to celebrate, believers are visibly exhibited as members of a common family. They sit down at the same table, eat of the same bread, drink of the same cup; and how can they do this with any propriety, unless they be loving one another? Am I cherishing angry or resentful feelings towards a fellow-Christian? Am I despising him for his poverty, or meanness of station, or want of abilities, or other causes of a similar kind? Am I conscious of no attraction towards him as a child of God, of no mutual sympathies existing betwixt his soul and mine in virtue of our joint participation in the blessings of redemption? Then how shall I unite with him in celebrating the great event by which our redemption was accomplished? How shall I receive from his hands, or pass to him, the elements that represent the broken body and shed blood of our common Saviour? Do I, therefore,—let this be my inquiry ere I go to the communion table,—do I love the brethren?* Other points of examination may be brought under your notice before the dispensation of the supper is proceeded with; but meanwhile let this important particular be duly weighed.

5. In the last place, *I would observe that Christ's departure from the world,* which his disciples were so slow of heart to believe, and so disposed (prior to the effusion of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost), to regard as an occurrence altogether calamitous, *was not a real loss to the Church, but the reverse.* The removal of our Saviour's

* For fuller illustration of the subject of "The Love of the Brethren," see the Sermon with that title in this volume.

bodily presence from this earth did not entail the evil consequences which they supposed that it would. It did not put an end to intercourse between him and his people. The eleven thought that this effect would follow; and, therefore, when Christ said to them that he was going away, sorrow filled their hearts. They foolishly judged as though their Master had been some common man. In the case of the death of an ordinary earthly friend, we experience a loss proportioned to the closeness of the communion we have been accustomed to hold with him, and to our need of his various kindly offices. He still lives, but it is in a distant sphere, where intercourse with him on our part is impossible, and whence he cannot come to give us aid in the time of necessity. We may cherish the hope of joining him after a few short years have passed; but meanwhile all fellowship between him and us is at an end. There is no more interchange of sentiment,—no more reciprocation of feeling,—no more giving or receiving of counsel,—no more bearing of each others burdens,—no more participating in each others joys and sorrows,—no more helping of one another in difficulties, strengthening of one another for duties, or supporting of one another in trials. The separation, however, which took place between Christ and his immediate disciples, and which exists now between Christ and us, was not at all of this kind. When he ascended up on high, his outward bodily presence certainly ceased to be perceived; but He himself, as far as all the purposes of friendship were concerned, continued with his people as before. Their communion with him has not been interrupted. If in perplexity, they have him to apply to for advice and direction, as truly as when he walked the earth; if in affliction, they can still make known to him their sorrows, with the certainty of receiving in answer to their prayers, strength and consolation from his grace; if joyful, they can still be assured that he

rejoices with them. Had the eleven, in the upper chamber of Jerusalem, understood these things as they did after the descent of the Holy Spirit, and as *we* now understand them, their hearts would not have been so overwhelmed at the prospect of Christ's going away. But more than this. Not only did the Saviour's departure not involve the loss which the disciples believed, but there was positive advantage in it,—advantage to them, and to the members of the Church everywhere and in all succeeding times. "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him unto you." In consequence of our Saviour's exaltation, we live under a larger dispensation of the Spirit than Old Testament saints enjoyed; the Holy Ghost in their times being "not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." O may we find in our experience the happy fruits of the Redeemer's departure, in an abundant outpouring of the Spirit upon us! May the windows of heaven be opened, and more than Pentecostal showers be shed down in this our day! Let us unitedly, habitually, earnestly pray, my friends, that this may be the case. "O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy."

VI.

THE MORNING OF THE FIRST CHRISTIAN SABBATH, OR INCIDENTS OF OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION.

"The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre," &c.—JOHN XX. 1–18.

THE passage which I have just read, and over which I mean to cast an expository glance, is distinguished by its picturesqueness. I mean to cast an expository glance over it rather than to expound it, because, from the length of the passage, it could not be fully expounded, clause by clause, in a single lecture; while, at the same time, I am unwilling that it should be divided, forming as it does a single complete piece, which could not be broken without suffering injury.

So marked is the quality of style that has been named, that one might translate the passage out of words into pictures, and present the whole narration in a series of these,—following each other like the different figures, or groups of figures, produced upon the wall of a room by the successive introduction of different slides into a magic lantern;—I say, one could present the narration in a series of such pictures, and they alone would almost suffice to

indicate the progress of the story, without any verbal explanation being appended. There would be, first, Mary Magdalene and her companions coming to the sepulchre, in the dusk of the morning, and finding it empty. We might call this *the company of women.* Then there would be the announcement of the fact by Mary to Peter and John. This might be named *tidings.* Another slide introduced into the lantern would show us *Peter and John running to the sepulchre, and Mary at a distance behind them.* Another would discover these same apostles within the sepulchre, reasoning upon the appearances which there meet their view. This might be entitled *conviction produced.* Another would exhibit *Mary weeping at the sepulchre.* Then would come *the vision of angels;* then, *Christ's discovery of himself;* and finally, *the message* sent through Mary to the disciples. In short, I purpose in addressing you further to carry out this conception; and to take as the heads of my discourse the pictures just mentioned, dwelling but a little upon each, as it is held up before you. I think that by this means I shall be able to convey to your minds, as vividly as I could do in any other manner, an apprehension both of the incidents of this exquisite portion of Scripture, and of the spirit which pervades it.

I. The first slide, then, shows us on the wall THE COMPANY OF WOMEN. Ver. 1.—"The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre."

Though Mary Magdalene is the only name mentioned by John, she was not alone. The other evangelists tell us that along with her were Mary the mother of James, and Salome; and there were probably others likewise. But Mary Magdalene is here specified, because the subse-

quent part of the chapter refers to her. Fancy, then, to yourselves a little company of women, leaving Jerusalem early, while it was yet dark, and bending their steps towards the spot, without the city, where Jesus had been interred. Observe the spices which they carry. You conjecture their errand; they are going forth to pay, as they consider, the last rites of respect to their Lord, by embalming his body.

Strange conjunction of unbelief and affection! Unbelief: for does not the light, which begins to streak the clouds on the edge of the eastern horizon, announce that the third day is at hand, the day on which Jesus predicted that he would rise from the dead? Had the women remembered the prediction of Jesus, and possessed that faith in it which they ought to have had, they could not have been seeking his tomb this morning, unless with the expectation of finding it tenantless. But their drooping heads and mournful appearances, and the spices which they carry, tell the sad tale that all thought of Christ's resurrection is absent from their breasts. We cannot, therefore, acquit them altogether of unbelief (though the germs of faith still remained in their souls); but let us do justice to their affection, which disappointment in its most trying form had not abated. In common with the other disciples of our Lord, they had regarded him as the Messiah. They trusted that it was he which should redeem Israel. Sharing in the carnal views of Christ's kingdom which were prevalent, they had looked forward to beholding him with a crown upon his head, and a sceptre in his hand, and all the insignia of royalty surrounding him. This dream is now over. Its baseless fabric vanished, when Jesus said on Calvary, "It is finished," and having bowed his head "gave up the ghost." But amidst the overthrow of opinion, and the wreck of expectation, their love had not perished. It survived unaltered; or, if changed at all,

its flame was not dimmed, but only purified by what had happened. There may have been (I doubt not there was) some selfish element in their attachment to Jesus living, and destined, in their conceptions, to sit in a literal sense upon the throne of his father David; there could be none in the attachment which led them to the grave.

The Jews did not bury their dead in the earth as we do; but in caves hewn out of rocks. In such a sepulchre Jesus had been interred; and the women, as they went on their way, were concerned least they should not be able to remove the stone by which the mouth of the cave was guarded; but when they reached the place, the stone was already rolled away, and, lo! the body which they came to embalm was absent.

II. Our second picture may be called TIDINGS.

Transfer your thoughts from the tomb, without the precincts of Jerusalem, to a dwelling in the city. There Peter and another apostle (the writer of the book from which our text is taken, who modestly suppresses his name, but sufficiently describes himself by the expression which he must have felt so much delight in being able to use, "the disciple whom Jesus loved") had spent the previous night. Suppose them now sitting together, in deep dejection; silent, or only speaking to ask one another the question which neither of them is able to solve, what opinion they are to form of Him whom they have been wont to call Master? What conclusion, weighing his life, his teaching, his miracles, and the impress of divinity that was on all he said or did, against his death, they are to come to?—Suddenly, all eagerness, breathless with haste, her look indicating that she brings intelligence at once inexplicable and important, Mary Magdalene enters. She has left the other women at the grave, and with the utmost

speed has come to communicate to the apostles the fact that she and her companions have found the cave where Jesus was interred, robbed of its treasure. Ver. 2.—"Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him." They have taken away the Lord! Strange, Mary, that this should be the only explanation of the absence of the Saviour's body which suggests itself to your mind, when Jesus so distinctly foretold that he should be put to death, and the third day rise again!

III. But not to dwell upon this, we introduce another slide into the lantern, and behold THE APOSTLES RUNNING TO THE TOMB. Ver. 3.—"Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre."

The tidings communicated seem to have fallen upon them like an electric shock. Without waiting to speculate upon what they heard, anxious only in the first instance to see with their own eyes how the case stood, they instantly started, and ran for the grave! The narration here becomes intensely graphic. Nature is presented without a shred of artificial drapery. Ver. 4.—"So they ran both together; and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre." It is no occasion for tardy ceremoniousness. The apostles do not wait for Mary; and John, the younger and swifter of the two, does not wait for Peter. The runners think not of one another. All ideas are meantime blotted from their minds, save one—the empty sepulchre.

IV. I crave your special attention to the picture which is next in order, and which I entitle CONVICTION AWAKENED.

Here I wish you to fancy the interior of the burial cave, with the two apostles in it, drawing inferences from what they beheld.

John, we saw, came first to the sepulchre, but whether restrained by timidity or awe, or a mixture of both, he did not enter. Ver. 5.—"And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in." It was reserved for the impetuous Peter to take this step. Ver. 6, 7, 8, 9.—"Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then," it is added, "went in also that other disciple which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. For as yet," up to the moment when these things were presented to their eyes, "they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead." We have thus the two apostles within the tomb, reasoning on what they behold: let us try to read their thoughts, and to divine the process by which an all-important conclusion is dawning upon them.

So then, methinks the beloved disciple argues with himself,—for the train of reasoning by which the conclusion was reached occurred to him in the first instance, and upon his mind the conclusion appears likewise to have more deeply impressed itself than upon the mind of Peter, —so then it is true. The body is gone, and here are the grave-clothes which have been stripped from it, and left behind; yet not cast down in a disorderly way, but decently folded and arranged. Who can have removed the body? Enemies? No. It was their policy to secure, that on the third day the body should still be found in the tomb: and besides, if they had taken it away, would they have left the grave-clothes behind? Has it then been carried away by friends? John well knew that the dis-

ciples of Jesus had entertained no thoughts of such a thing. Fraud was not in their minds. Their spirit likewise was completely crushed, so as to render them unfit for any hazardous enterprise. And even had it been otherwise, the guard of Roman soldiers, who had been placed over the tomb, made the abstraction of the body, whether forcibly or by stealth, impossible. And then, the grave-clothes! *They* refute the hypothesis still more manifestly than the former. For, would disciples coming by night, and stealing away the body, have paused to divest it of its burial dress? Would they have stripped off the linen clothes, and placed them here; and taken the napkin from the head of the deceased, and wrapped it up, and laid it quietly there by itself? Inconceivable! Such reflections seem to have occurred to both of the apostles, but John, with his quick instinctive mind, first caught the truth. Can it be that the Lord has risen? He told us that he would rise from the dead on the third day; but we understood him not: is this the fulfilment of his words? It is now the morning of the third day. It must be so. The miracle is great; the fact is overwhelming, but not incredible to one who has known Jesus, and witnessed the whole train of his stupendous works. This is just the apex of the pyramid. The Lord is risen!

John "saw and believed;" and Peter, as he had arrived second at the tomb, came also, though behind his companion, and (as certain parts of the Gospel history lead us to infer) with less confidence, to a like conclusion. In the empty grave, conviction of the reality of the resurrection was awakened in their minds. "For as yet," up to this time, "they knew not the scripture, that he must rise from the dead."

"Then," it is added, "the disciples went away again unto their own home."

V. Another picture — MARY WEEPING AT THE SEPULCHRE. Ver. 11.—"But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping." We have lost sight of Mary, since she delivered her tidings to the two apostles in Jerusalem. We saw that, on hearing her story, they started at once, and ran for the grave, leaving her behind. It appears that she followed them. She may not have done so at once. Indulging her emotions, she may have remained in the house for a short time, till her anxiety to learn whatever might be evolved caused her to go out and bend her steps towards the grave. If so, upon her arrival she may have found that Peter and John had already departed. Or, if she left the house at the same time with them, following as fast as she was able, she would no doubt reach the grave while they were there; in which case we must suppose that they, on coming out from the sepulchre, passed homewards without communicating to her the new convictions to which they had themselves awaked; possibly not observing (or hardly observing) her, through the occupation of their minds; and she, on her part, wrapped in her grief, and unaware of their having found a solution of the mystery, allowing them to pass without inquiry. However it was, we have Mary represented to us, standing by the sepulchre alone, after Peter and John have left. She does not reason on the facts before her, as they have done. All that she can do is to weep. Her woman's nature is cast in the mould, not of ratiocination, but of feeling. The fact is palpable to her sense, that the body of Jesus is not in the tomb; and accepting at once the inference (of the unreasonableness of which a little reflection had convinced the more thoughtful minds of Peter and John) that the body had been removed by the hands of unknown persons, she is unable to command her emotions. That the last rest of one to whom she owed so much, one in whom all gracious qualities centered, one whose every step through life had been marked

by beneficence, who had gone about continually doing good, healing all manner of sickness and disease among the people,—that his last rest should be violated, his remains insulted, his body cast out unembalmed, is a thought she cannot bear. The tears that fill her eyes, and course down her cheeks, tell how deeply she is wounded.

VI. The picture that follows is THE VISION OF ANGELS. Ver. 11, latter part—"And, as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre," &c. The action of Mary is worthy of notice. "She stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre." Why? Had she not already examined it, and was she not aware from previous inspection that what she sought was not there? True; yet her conduct was natural. She was like a man who, having deposited a precious gem in what he considers a safe place, and found it abstracted, and having searched for it everywhere unsuccessfully, comes back again and again and surveys bewildered the empty casket, as if unable to credit his senses, saying to himself, Is it possible that the gem is gone? Or we may compare her to a bird which has been robbed of its young by cruel hands, and which, on discovering its loss, flies all around seeking them; and when it cannot find them, returns ever and anon on perplexed wing to inspect the vacant nest.

Fancy Mary, therefore, in the attitude described, and let your eyes follow hers. "She stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain." Mary obviously does not understand that these are angelic beings whom she beholds. They wear the form of men, and she simply regards them as such, deeming them apparently two disciples who have been informed by some of the other women of what has occurred, and have come down to the grave during her

absence, and remained in it after the departure of Peter and John. The angels accost her, "Woman, why weepest thou?" And she answers, nearly in the identical terms which she used to Peter and John, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him;" only, whereas in speaking to the apostles she called Christ "*the* Lord," she now terms him "*my* Lord," as if the very hopelessness of finding him endeared him the more. This little pronoun "my" is at the same time a scintillation indicating that, amidst no small measure of unbelief, the inward fire of faith (as I hinted at an earlier part of the discourse) is not entirely quenched. Yes, Mary, *your* Lord! He was your Lord when you beheld him yet alive; and, confounded though your understanding be by his death and burial, your heart tells you that he is your Lord still, and must be so for ever.

Besides the homage that was done to Christ, by the angels attending him in the scene of his deepest abasement, like nobles waiting upon their king, a purpose served by their appearance to Mary may have been to comfort her by the manifestation of sympathy. Angels are all "ministering spirits," we know, "sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation;" and it should not be thought extraordinary that these two, in such peculiar circumstances, should have been employed to speak some soothing words to this poor and disconsolate disciple of Jesus,—words, the calming influence of which she could not but feel, ignorant though she was, what and whence they were, by whom the kindly office was rendered. The angels applied some drops of oil which mollified her wound, prior to its being completely closed and bound up, as it was destined immediately to be, by the Lord himself.

VII. But now comes a great picture, THE DISCOVERY. Here you are to suppose Mary still at the mouth of the

sepulchre, not however looking into it, but turned back, and embracing the feet of Jesus, who, having approached unexpectedly, has revealed himself to her.

Just as she finished her reply to the angels, she heard a footstep behind her. It was the Lord. The Psalmist says, that "the Lord is nigh to them that are of a broken heart." Mary found this scripture verified in a literal sense. She was honoured to receive a visible proof, the first afforded to any of the disciples, of the resurrection of Him who had been dead and was alive again; whom living, she erroneously sought among the dead, but whom dead, as she conceived him still to be, she loved with a devout affection. Ver. 14.—"And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus." She saw a person, but did not at once observe who it was: which is explained by considering that she had no conception of Christ's having risen, nor expectation of meeting him; and likewise that her mind was confused with grief, and her eyes blinded with tears; and, still further, that, as we shall presently see, she did not raise towards Christ more than an imperfect look, what I may term a half-glance.

The stranger questioned her to the same effect, and in the same kindly manner as the angels had done: "Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?" You will recollect that the sepulchre where Jesus had been interred was in a garden belonging to Joseph of Arimathea. Mary imagined that this might be the gardener who was speaking to her; the thought at the same time occurred, that possibly he might have removed the body to some other place; and, encouraged by his gentle and sympathising tone, she conceived the hope that if it were so, he would not refuse to tell her what he had done with the body, and to permit her to pay the last rites to it. "She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have

borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." She does not name Jesus, but speaks in indefinite terms, "if thou have borne *him* hence;" her thoughts being so full of the Saviour, that she assumes that every one must know whom she meant. But, O thou affectionate heart! dry thy tears, and look who it is that speaks with thee! "Jesus saith unto her, Mary." She starts at the word. Her name pronounced by the lips of the Saviour, pronounced in tender yet reproving surprise that she should not have recognised him—('Mary! what is this? am I become a stranger to thee?'),—is enough. "She turned herself," as the evangelist tells us, turned herself like lightning, fully towards the person whom she had not hitherto regarded except with a careless inspection; and, perceiving the truth, threw herself at his feet, and clung to him, uttering but the one word, "Rabboni," Master.

What a discovery! But Jesus speaks. "Touch me not," hold not by me, cling not thus to me, "for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God." There is much in these words both to instruct and comfort.—*First*, Cling not to me, as if, having found me, you were never to be deprived of my bodily presence again. We must part. Your affection cannot detain me upon the earth. Mary probably imagined, in the first moment of her transport, that she should never more be separated from Jesus while she lived. 'He has risen from the dead, as he foretold: foolish, forgetful, and incredulous that we were, to let his words fall out of mind! He will now assume the sovereignty of Israel; and, as behoves the Messiah, rule visibly in the midst of his enemies.' Ah! this fancy must be banished. Cling not to me, the Saviour says, with any such feeling. "I ascend;" for the purpose of completing the salvation of my people, I must ascend to heaven. Give your affection

wings, and let it follow me thither. It was necessary that, having finished my work, I should quit the grave: it is no less necessary for me to leave the world and go to my Father. My exaltation does not terminate with my resurrection, great though that event is: it will remain imperfect till I have sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.—*Again*, Cling not to me, as if I were about to be taken up immediately. "I am not yet ascended." You are not going to lose me at once. A period is still to run, during which you will have opportunities of seeing my face, and enjoying intercourse with me. Other interviews will be vouchsafed to you. Be not, therefore, so strongly affected, as if it were the last occasion of showing me the homage you now pay, or testifying your regard to me.—*Still further*, Cling not to me, for there is a present message on which I wish to despatch you. Arise, and carry to my brethren the intelligence that you have seen me; and make them acquainted with my purposed ascension. "Say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God." How sweet this language! Sweet in itself, it must appear peculiarly so when the circumstances of the disciples are considered. On the night of his apprehension they had all forsaken him and fled. One had denied him with oaths and curses. Will he forgive this? He does not *say* so. In the mention of forgiveness, there is rebuke: but our Lord wishes in the meantime to console those to whom his message is directed, and not to rebuke them. His words, however, *imply*, that pardon, in the fullest measure, has been bestowed. "Go to my brethren," (they are his brethren still,) "and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God;" he owns them still as standing, on the footing of his suretyship, in a covenant relation to the Most High.

VIII. The last picture in the series is THE MESSAGE DELIVERED.

The scene changes once more to Jerusalem. The disciples are there assembled, earnestly discussing the facts with which they are already acquainted; weighing the amount of proof for the reality of the resurrection, afforded by the absence of the body and the disposition of the grave-clothes, as witnessed by Peter and John. In these circumstances, Mary presents herself among them; tells them that Jesus has actually appeared to her; and delivers the message with which she is charged. Ver. 18.—"Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her." Her testimony would, no doubt, be an additional element in the scale, inclining John, and, in a less degree, Peter, to abide in their impression of the reality of the resurrection. But the generality of the disciples were so little prepared for such a conclusion, that (as we learn from another evangelist) they regarded the testimony of Mary, and that likewise of certain other persons, to whom Jesus subsequently appeared, as "idle tales." If, in this respect, they were guilty of an error, as we must allow them to have been, considering the distinctness with which Jesus had foretold that he would rise from the dead, at all events the incredulity which they at first manifested makes their decided subsequent acknowledgment of the truth, when evidence was afforded to themselves personally, more striking.

Such is the passage of which I proposed to take a rapid survey; and now that we have gone over it, cursory as our glance has been, what a natural exhibition of varied character has passed before us! What an illustration have we had of the infirmity remaining in even the sincerest Christians, particularly of that "slowness of heart to believe,"

which is the root of every other defect! More than all, how sweetly have the condescension and "gentleness of Christ" appeared in the incidents reviewed!

The apostles, even those (as I hinted a moment ago) who were at first most disposed to be sceptical regarding our Lord's resurrection, had all their doubts removed in due time. Thomas himself, whose demands for evidence were of an utterly unreasonable kind, could not but be satisfied, when he was permitted "to put his finger into the print of the nails" in his Lord's hands, "and to thrust his hand into his side." And in the faith of the original eye-witnesses of the resurrection, confirmed as that was by the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the day of Pentecost, and by the miracles performed in the name of a risen Saviour, we have a most sufficient basis for *our* belief. If infidelity could even get over the circumstantial and well-supported narrative of the empty sepulchre—if its insinuation could be allowed, that the apostles may have been deceived when they fancied that on several occasions they saw and talked with their most familiar friend, and probed with their fingers the deep scars of peculiar injuries which they knew him recently to have received—or if it could be listened to, when it hints that these same apostles who, in confirmation of what they affirmed, suffered the loss of all things, and cheerfully submitted to death itself, were deceivers,—the miracles wrought in attestation of the resurrection of Jesus would still remain;—miracles for the actual performance of which we have (need I remind you?) the implied testimony of vast multitudes, besides the individuals to whom our Lord "showed himself alive after his passion." The resurrection of Jesus, therefore, ranks not with "cunningly-devised fables," nor with matters of dubious credibility, but is AN ESTABLISHED FACT.

This fact is connected with our salvation, in the closest manner, and in a variety of ways. It showed Jesus to be

indeed "the Christ, the Son of the living God." It proved that his atoning sacrifice was accepted by the Father; and affords, therefore, to such as put their trust in him for pardon and acceptance, a glorious security that they shall obtain these inestimable blessings. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again." It is likewise by the grace and power of a risen Saviour, and through the instrumentality of that system of truth of which his rising from the dead forms the foundation, that believers are quickened, directed, and upheld in the divine life. The resurrection, too, of Christ, the Head, involves that of his people, the members. For "now is Christ risen, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits, and afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming." Let us, my friends, endeavour habitually to contemplate and improve the subject in these various respects. Let Jesus, "declared to be the Son of God, with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead," be willingly acknowledged by us, after the example of Thomas, as "our Lord and our God." Let us derive confidence from his resurrection, in looking to him as the propitiation for our sins. Let us seek each day of our lives to know more of him, in the sanctifying power of his resurrection. Let his resurrection have its appropriate influence with us, as a motive to holiness. And in fine, let us see in his resurrection a pledge that we too, if we are his disciples, shall be raised up hereafter from our graves, to reign with him in never-ending blessedness.

VII.

THE MIRROR.

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."—2 Cor. iii. 18.

When it is said that the glory of the Lord is beheld by believers with open face, a comparison is implied in these words, "with open face," between the circumstances of Old Testament and those of New Testament saints. Under the ancient economy, the glory of the Lord was displayed in the revelation then enjoyed; but, owing to the form of the revelation, it was displayed obscurely. A veil, so to speak, was betwixt the eyes of the beholders and the object of their contemplation. But there is no such veil in our case. What *they* saw indistinctly, *we* see in perfect fulness and unclouded beauty.

This remark will also make it evident what is to be understood by the glass or mirror in which the glory of the Lord is beheld. It is the incarnate Mediator, "the Word made flesh." A comparative dimness characterised all the manifestations which God made of himself to those who lived before the coming of Christ; but when "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father" appeared in the world, "he declared him;" de-

clared him as far as it seems possible for the infinite Jehovah to be revealed to man. A strictly parallel passage to our text, and one which proves the correctness of the interpretation now given, occurs at the sixth verse of the following chapter of this epistle, where the apostle tells us that "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God *in the face of Jesus Christ*" is imparted to believers.

The text may therefore be briefly paraphrased as follows:—We all; we who live in Gospel times; we who have witnessed the actual fulfilment of the promises made to the fathers; we who have seen the Word made flesh, and have had the plan of redemption exhibited to us, not in types, nor by means of ceremonial rites, but in its literal reality—we all, occupying a position of such high privilege; enjoying so clear a revelation of God; beholding, through no obscuring medium, but directly, the glory of the Lord reflected from the person of his incarnate Son, as from a burnished mirror—are, as the effect of such a manifestation of Jehovah, ourselves changed into his likeness by a glorious and progressive course of sanctification, through the agency of the Holy Ghost.

Such is the statement which, in the following discourse, I shall endeavour to illustrate; and, separating the main ideas, you will perceive that they are the following. *First*, the face of Jesus Christ is a glass or mirror reflecting the glory of the Lord; *secondly*, believers beholding the glory of the Lord in this mirror are progressively transformed into Jehovah's image; and *thirdly*, the efficient agent in working such transformation is the Holy Spirit. Let us go to the consideration of these topics, praying that there may be no veil upon our minds preventing us from comprehending or profiting by them.

I. I begin by considering THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST as a mirror which reflects the glory of the Lord.

By the glory of the Lord we are to understand the perfections of his nature—those attributes on account of which he claims, and is entitled to, the homage of his creatures. It would not be possible to present a better summary of the divine perfections than is given in our Shorter Catechism in answer to the question, What is God ?—an answer at once simple and sublime, brief and comprehensive. "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." The various attributes here mentioned form in their combination the glory of the Lord. It is because God possesses them that he is—and, world without end, shall be—worthy of being glorified.

The glory of the Lord—the impress of his perfections—is stamped upon all his works. There is not an object in the field of nature which does not present unmistakable traces of a divine hand. Consider the meanest flower that blooms in the valley; examine any leaf that grows upon the trees; look at the unnumbered forms of animal life, from the microscopic insect to the largest of animated tribes, and in all you will perceive most striking proofs of the intelligence, power, and beneficence of the Creator. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge." The stars trembling in their places, the clouds floating on the atmosphere, the winds as they blow, the thunder as it rolls, the sounding cataract, the majestic ocean, the drops of dew glittering like pearls in the lap of morning, the varied products of the changing seasons,—all speak to us in language which we cannot misunderstand, without doing violence to the instinctive dictates of our own breasts; and what they say is, "Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised"—"The Lord is good to all"—"His wisdom is unsearchable."

Something also of the glory of the Lord may be learned

from the book of providence. When we inquire into the effects naturally flowing from different courses of conduct, we find that though moral irregularities—inseparable, as far as we can judge, from a probationary state like the present, where good and bad are mingled together—do appear; the decided tendency of wickedness is to produce misery, and of righteousness to lead to happiness. It is a fair inference that the God by whom such a constitution of things has been established, disapproves of sin and approves of holiness. The consequences which in his providence he has attached to men's actions, are an indication of his own character.

But though the glory of the Lord thus shines both in creation and providence, these are mirrors in which it is exhibited dimly and imperfectly. The works of nature tell us, indeed, as fully as it seems possible for us to be informed, of what are usually termed God's natural attributes; his necessary and eternal existence, his omnipotence and his infinite wisdom. But they are silent in regard to his moral attributes, if we except the intimations they afford of his goodness. The events of providence again throw some light upon the moral perfections of Jehovah. They whisper to us, "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance doth behold the upright." This they do, however, in so indistinct a manner as practically to have scarce any weight, where not joined with other and more unambiguous testimonies. But our text points us to a mirror greater and more resplendent by far than either creation or providence, THE WORD MADE FLESH. In the face of Emmanuel, all the perfections of God, particularly his moral attributes, are glassed with the utmost clearness. Yes, my friends, we might study for a thousand lifetimes the things that God's hand has made,—we might traverse the immensity of space above us, and ask every shining orb to tell us what is God,—we might search every nook

and corner of this lower globe, and put the same question to all creatures, animate and inanimate, in earth or sea,—we might examine the events which God is, from day to day, bringing to pass, and seek to obtain from them a knowledge of his nature ;—and it would be little after all that we should learn—little in itself—and little especially of what it is most important that we should know. But let us come to the contemplation of Christ; and, looking with humility and reverence upon him, we shall there see the image of God in most vivid and perfect manifestation.

1. For consider, in the first place, *the personal qualities exhibited by our Lord while dwelling among men.*

What were these but the perfections of the divine nature, as they would unfold themselves amidst the scenes of human life? It might be remarked, that even the natural attributes of God, as far as they are capable of illustration, were exemplified in the miracles which Christ wrought. Is omniscience an attribute of Jehovah? Jesus "knew what was in man." He told the woman of Samaria "all things that ever she did;" and astonished Nathanael by a discovery of his secret exercise under the fig-tree. Is omnipotence a divine attribute? Jesus spake, and it was done. Winds and waves obeyed him. He healed diseases with a word. He opened the eyes of the blind; and unstopped the ears of the deaf; caused the tongue of the dumb to sing; cast out devils; and raised the dead to life. It is not however to the natural, but to the moral qualities of Jehovah, that believers become conformed. No man can, by contemplating such properties as omniscience and omnipotence, acquire a resemblance to God in respect of these. It is only into the divine image, as consisting "in righteousness and true holiness," that we can be changed. I limit your attention therefore to this latter point, and speak merely of the perfect moral character of the Saviour. In all things he was made like unto his brethren, the sole ex-

ception being that he was "without sin." Constantly mingling in the society of sinners, he yet remained separate from those among whom he walked; "holy, harmless, undefiled;" a taint of their corruption never communicating itself to him; a shadow of dimness never for a moment sullying the lustre of his purity. As the divine law is not an arbitrary code of precepts, but has its foundation in the nature of Jehovah, and is an expression of what God, morally considered, is, so the life of Christ again was a transcript of that law into practice. He "fulfilled all righteousness." Temptation was powerless to seduce him into evil. "The prince of this world cometh," he himself said on the night before his death, "and hath nothing in me." Satan on that, as on many previous occasions, drew near to inspect and try on every side the lofty fortress of the Redeemer's integrity, but discovered no breach where he could successfully enter. Our Lord therefore exhibited, through his sinless human nature, received into union with the divine, in the daily life which he led and in the dispositions which he displayed as "the man Christ Jesus," a vivid representation of God. The glory of the Word made flesh, which was beheld by those among whom he dwelt—the glory, among other things of his personal character—was a glory "*as* of the only begotten of the Father," such as the only begotten of the Father might be expected to manifest. It was suitable to one who was God incarnate; and it revealed upon earth, as far as that can be done by visible portraiture, ~~that~~ what God is in heaven. Would you (to take but one example) see embodied that wonderful combination of attributes which Scripture ascribes to God, and through the perception of which, on the part of believers, more than through any other instrumentality, their hearts are changed; I mean, hatred of sin, inflexible justice in punishing it, tenderest compassion for sinners, and intense desire for their salvation? Then you have but to

look to Jesus weeping over Jerusalem. You have but to hear him giving expression to his feelings, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." It is, of course, impossible that God, as such, could lie under any obligations corresponding to those which arise from the relative positions which men occupy towards one another: but if we were to imagine a being, whose nature was in every respect in harmony with that of Jehovah, placed under such obligations, how could he fulfil them otherwise than Jesus did? "Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me, hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?"

2. But there is another, and still higher sense in which the glory of the Lord is displayed in Jesus as in a mirror; I allude to *the illustration afforded of the divine perfections by his sufferings and death.* When this is taken into account, even more than when our attention is turned to the Redeemer's personal character, the words just quoted, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father," are understood, and their truth perceived.

How clear and awfully impressive, how fitted to arrest attention and to affect the mind, is the demonstration of the divine holiness which has been furnished by the sacrifice of Christ! Some such revelation of God was needed; for men are naturally prone to regard God as "altogether such an one as themselves," and to fancy, because *they* judge sin to be a small matter, that *he* views it in the same light. They are apt to be but little moved by even the weightiest verbal assurances that He with whom they have to do is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Now the sufferings and death of Christ are a commentary on Jehovah's esti-

mate of sin which it is impossible to mistake. In the cross, we have the most emphatic practical contradiction that can be conceived to the notion that the Most High can bear to look upon sin. Delusion on this fundamental point is effectually banished by our contemplating God as manifested "in the face of Jesus Christ;" for that must certainly be most malignant in the sight of God, most intolerable to his nature, which caused him to withdraw for a season the light of his countenance from his own Son, the object of his eternal and unchangeable affection.

The justice of God is a modification of his holiness. It is his holiness manifesting itself towards his creatures, regarded as the subjects of moral rule and as placed under law. Rational creatures are necessarily under law to God; it is implied in the very idea of a law that it should be guarded by penal sanctions; and justice requires that when the law has been broken, the penalty attached to the violation of it should be inflicted. Were God not carrying the sanctions of his law into execution, he would cease to deserve the character of a righteous God, would give a fatal license and encouragement to sin, and would thus loosen the very pillars of his government. But in the face of Jesus Christ, God is seen to be absolutely, inflexibly just. It is chiefly from their entire want of any provision to save this essential attribute of the divine character, that the various systems of religion which men have devised are so utterly unsatisfactory to an awakened conscience. When the Most High is held forth as willing to pardon sin upon the repentance of the guilty, without any thing in the form of satisfaction being rendered for their offences, we ask, Is justice in God then nothing? Has it no claims? Or, if it have, can they be lightly set aside? Far otherwise. God must be just, even in justifying the ungodly. "Without shedding of blood is no remission." The reconciliation of sinners to their offended Maker is not

possible, except on the ground of a sufficient atonement made for their iniquities. These the Gospel lays down as its first principles; and when it comes to tell us how these principles are wrought out, when it shows us Christ—"the Lamb of God"—made "sin for us"—giving "himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour"—"wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities"—"pouring out his soul unto death" in our room—what a solemnising view of the divine righteousness do we receive!

Were Jehovah known but as endowed with holiness and justice, he could not to sinful creatures be any thing except an object of dread. His glory, however splendid and august, intrinsically considered, would, in such a case, be without aught to impart confidence, or to attract the soul. It is the attribute of mercy, added to his other perfections, that, like the rainbow around the throne, softens what would else be too terrible for contemplation. In every view, therefore, which sinners are invited to take of God, a prominent place must be given to this quality. He with whom we have to do must be discovered to us as combining rich and free mercy with his holiness and justice; and nowhere is he thus discovered, except in the Gospel. But "the face of Jesus Christ" is a mirror where the compassion of Jehovah shines most conspicuously. In him, mercy is seen rejoicing over millions of once perishing but now ransomed men, at the same time that the holiness of God is unshadowed by a breath of dimness, and his justice is preserved inviolate. It was mercy alone that led God to think of saving sinners when they had forfeited his favour and exposed themselves to his righteous displeasure. It was mercy—the length, and breadth, and height, and depth of which, what language can declare?—that prevailed with him to save them through the expedient of giving up his own Son to die in their stead. Whether we consider

the formation of the Gospel plan, or the various steps taken in carrying it out,—whether we think of the unworthiness of those who have been redeemed through Christ, or of the costliness of the sacrifice paid for them, our sense of the divine mercy must be overpowering. "God is love." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

II. These remarks may suffice to explain the manner in which Jesus Christ, as a mirror, reflects the glory of the Lord. Not only were the personal qualities of the incarnate Redeemer an embodiment of the moral excellence of Jehovah; but besides, and more particularly, his atoning sufferings and death have given an unparalleled illustration of the divine perfections to the universe. I proceed now to consider, as proposed, in the second place, the effect which the contemplation of the glory of the Lord, displayed in the face of Jesus Christ, has upon believers; namely, to transform them more and more into the divine image. "We are changed into the same image from glory to glory."

The mirrors employed by the ancients were for the most part of burnished metal, the reflection from which was very intense. According to the figure of the text, you are to imagine such a mirror, with a strong light falling upon it, and an individual standing in the reflected rays, in which position his countenance would shine with a lustre akin to that of the object from which the illumination proceeded. Even so (the doctrine of the text is) believers standing in view of the incarnate Saviour, amidst the emanations of divine glory which his face gives forth, and looking in-

tently upon the perfections of God displayed in him, are assimilated to God, and made to exhibit, and that increasingly from day to day, something of the perfection which they admire in God. I may illustrate the idea of the apostle in a different (yet not dissimilar) manner by referring to an art unknown in his days,—I mean daguerreotyping. Those of you who have witnessed that process know that, in taking a daguerreotype likeness, the light coming from the countenance of the person sitting is received by the plate, and acts chemically upon it, producing there a picture of the individual; the lines in which are in the first moment very faint; the next moment, somewhat stronger; and so on, the figure always growing more distinct, till the process is completed. Thus the image of God transfers itself in a progressive manner to believers, on whose souls the rays of the divine perfections, streaming from the face of Jesus, fall.

The principle on which the progressive sanctification of believers, as here described, takes place, is a very familiar one. It is, that whatever we habitually, intently, and lovingly contemplate, gives a colour to our minds. This is well known to hold good in the case of allowed familiarity with any thing vicious or depraved. Suppose that a person frequents the company of wicked men, joins in their conversation, listens complacently to the expression of their opinions, sees the ways in which they act, and lives in the daily and approving observation of their habits, will there not certainly be an influence at work, moulding him after the patterns which they present, and fast making him (if he be not already) as much "a child of hell" as his associates? Or consider the effect of depraved literature. An individual, from a vitiated taste, feeds his mind upon trifling or immoral productions. Novels, of the most empty or unwholesome kind, he eagerly seizes hold of; while he never thinks of taking up serious works, such as

demand thought and inculcate important lessons. What will be the consequence of the indulgence of such a taste? Inevitably to confirm his trifling or vicious character. Every day his mind will grow more frivolous and unfitted for sober practical work, or more contaminated and impure. The deleterious ingredients with which the atmosphere that he permits himself to breathe is charged, will enter into and infect his own moral system. The opposite case holds equally good. Let a man, from an appreciation of what is excellent, choose as friends those only who are worthy,—let his habitual intercourse be, not with the profane, the intemperate, the licentious, the worldly, but with persons of religious principle, from whose lips an unholy sentiment never falls, but only "that which is good to the use of edifying, ministering grace to the hearers," and whose conduct, agreeing with their profession, is (with such exceptional failures as must be looked for in the best of mankind) an exemplification of whatever is "true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report;"—he cannot fail to imbibe their spirit, and to have his piety and attachment to virtue strengthened through their influence. If, in like manner, in choosing his "silent friends," as they have been called—the books which he shall chiefly study —he select works pervaded by holy and ennobling sentiments, the natural tendency of these will be to render him more holy and noble-minded.

It is on the same principle on which these results take place, that a believer's contemplation of the glory of the Lord, as mirrored in the incarnate Word, has a purifying effect upon him, transforming him more and more into the image of God. Believers are supposed to make GOD IN CHRIST a subject of habitual serious thought,—to meditate much upon the embodiment and visible representation which the moral perfection of the "Holy, holy, holy, Lord of hosts," received in the sinless life of Christ,—and, more

particularly, to have their minds much directed to the wondrous illustration of the holiness, justice, and mercy of Jehovah that was furnished by Christ's atoning sufferings and death. What can the effect of such exercise be, but to mould them into a degree of resemblance to God,—to draw them, by the united cords of gratitude and admiration, to an imitation of him,—to make them see in sin something of the malignity which he sees in it,—to lead them to hate it with something of the intensity with which he hates it,—and to bring them to feel something of sympathy with him in the condemnation of it, as the Psalmist writes, "that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest?" We are told that "the pure in heart shall see God." The converse statement is no less correct, that it is by seeing God that purity of heart is attained. The perfect possession of a holy character is indispensably requisite to the full vision of God to be enjoyed hereafter; while, at the same time, it is through means of the vision of him enjoyed now, that the holy character of believers is gradually brought to its perfection.

It is of consequence to observe that such a habitual, intent, and loving contemplation of the divine perfections as the text describes, supposes the previous regeneration or spiritual quickening of the soul. The apostle is not speaking of an effect produced upon unregenerate men, but of the carrying forward, in the experience of believers, of a work whose germs have been already formed. The glory of the Lord reflected from the face of Christ is never understood or appreciated by unregenerate persons. Splendidly as it is glassed there, they cannot behold it, owing to the veil that is upon their minds. Nor even if they could, would they be disposed to look at it, and to make it their study. Instead of this, they would turn away from it with fear and aversion. To suppose a person willingly standing in the light of attributes, all of which wear a hostile as-

pect towards him, and with none of which—while he is yet dead in sins, unquickened by divine grace—has his mind even an initial feeling of sympathy, would be to suppose a moral contradiction. But the case to which the apostle refers is that of a believer; one reconciled to God, and therefore having nothing to dread from any of the divine perfections; one who sees not only mercy, but all the other attributes of Jehovah likewise, smiling benignantly upon him; one, in short, who, though still in a great measure imperfect, has undergone such a change of nature that the divine perfections appear most lovely in his view, and (as far as imitable) worthy of imitation. Such an one will naturally come to the light of the glory of God shining in the face of Christ,—will dwell with familiar and admiring eye upon the perfections of God exhibited in Christ, making them the subject of constant devout meditation: and, as a necessary consequence, he will experience in his soul a growing conformity to God.

III. This brings me, however, in the third and last place, to notice the efficient agent in the transformation of believers—the Holy Ghost: "Even as by the Spirit of the Lord." The form of the expression here used,—not simply "*by* the Spirit of the Lord," but "*even as by* the Spirit of the Lord,"—is somewhat peculiar. The idea conveyed by the word "*as*," is not similarity, but suitableness. The apostle's meaning is not that the change wrought upon believers is like what the Spirit of the Lord would produce if his agency were exerted, but that it is actually the production of the Spirit of the Lord, and is at the same time suitable to such an agent. We may compare with the phrase before us the statement of the apostle John regarding our Saviour, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." The glory which John witnessed did not merely resemble that of the only begotten

Son of God; it belonged to the only begotten Son of God, and (the words further imply) was suitable to him—was such as the Son of God, becoming incarnate, might be expected to display. So believers are said in the text to be changed into the image of Jehovah, "even as by the Spirit of the Lord." The author of the change is the Spirit of the Lord, and the change is worthy of its author.

Scripture clearly distinguishes between the moral instrumentality from which sanctification results, and the agent who renders such instrumentality effectual. We have spoken, under the former head, of the tendency of Gospel truth to produce, in those who apprehend and believe it, a conformity to God. This it does in the way of moral instrumentality. But it is quite in harmony with this doctrine to hold, as we also do, that the influence of the Holy Ghost is indispensable in order to that apprehension and belief of the truth without which its influence cannot be experienced. Believers are in one sense "born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the Word of God;" but as the Word of God is merely the instrument which the Spirit employs, they are therefore also, in another sense, "born of water and of the Spirit." The apostle Peter describes the converts to whom he writes, as having "purified their souls in obeying the truth:" but how? "Through the Spirit." So in our text, saints are represented as beholding the glory of the Lord mirrored in the face of Christ, and as being through that means changed into the same image from glory to glory; yet not irrespectively of a divine power exerted in connection with the truth; for the effect takes place, "even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

An opinion has sometimes been maintained, and has been sought to be confirmed by passages of Scripture, interpreted apart from the context, and in a manner at variance

with other passages, that truth alone presented to the mind, without any special divine influence put forth on the mind itself, is adequate to produce all that change from sin to holiness of which believers are represented in Scripture as being the subjects. But this opinion is quite unscriptural, and is very pernicious in several respects;—particularly, I would say, as making the prayers which we are instructed to present for grace to preserve us from temptation and to assist us in duty, words without meaning. Undoubtedly, the exhibition of truth is instrumental in promoting the sanctification of believers. The text shows that it is. Our Saviour's words to his disciples, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you," show that it is. His prayer for his people, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth," shows that it is. But this leaves the question open, whether divine influence does not need to be put forth upon the mind in order to its perceiving and being affected by the truth,—a question which, I imagine, is settled by such statements as that of the apostle, "The natural man receiveth NOT the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Though the sun were blazing in the firmament with meridian brightness, it would be invisible to the blind; though the sweetest music were being played, a deaf man would sit insensible to the strains; though you were straying through summer groves, where the most fragrant odours were wafted on every breeze, you would not be affected by them, if you were destitute of the sense of smell. Now the sinner in his natural state wants the spiritual sense requisite to his apprehending and relishing that glorious manifestation of Jehovah which the person and work of Christ afford; and the lustre of which may be beaming around him; its melody sounding in his ears; and its balm, sweeter than all incense

"From the spicy shores
Of Araby the blest,"

perfuming every breath he draws. And who can impart the sense thus wanting, except the Spirit of the Lord?

While the Spirit quickens the soul at first, and thus brings it into the condition in which alone the glory of the Lord can be discerned; it is no less his office to exert a constant illuminating influence upon believers. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." "The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you." To the last, we must have the Spirit, "receiving of Christ's, and showing it unto us," that our perceptions of the glory of God in Christ may both continue, and become fuller and more lively. Were the Spirit which has been imparted to a believer to be withdrawn from him—which is not possible; but were we conceiving such a thing to take place, there would be an end at once to all those discoveries of God which have made his heart thrill with adoration and joy,—there would be an instant palsying of all his spiritual faculties,—a melancholy pause to his progress in conformity to God,—nay, a complete obliteration of the divine image, already so far traced upon his soul. This, however, cannot occur, for "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance;" and I only put the case, in order that, by suggesting the awful consequences that would follow the withdrawal of the Spirit, I may make you more anxious to have his influences in their largest measure shed down upon you. May "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory . . . give . . . the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him," abundantly, and more and more abundantly every day, to all present!

1. From the subject which has been considered, it is plain that HOLINESS IS THE ONLY GENUINE TEST OF SPI-

RITUAL ILLUMINATION. There have been, in every age, melancholy examples of persons professing to have obtained rich and sweet discoveries of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, who were nevertheless living unsanctified lives,—indulging in open, or in allowed secret sin; and this has tended to make the very name of spiritual illumination nauseous to men of the world. Disgust has been felt, and no wonder, when individuals spoke of being inwardly enlightened by divine grace, and yet were mean, niggardly, crooked, disingenuous, debased, sensual, worldly, in their feelings and behaviour. No small opprobrium has thus fallen on a precious truth. I believe most firmly that no man is a Christian who has not been divinely enlightened. I believe that no man knows any thing aright of the character of God who has not, through the special illumination of the Holy Ghost, been led to see his perfections as these radiate from the face of Jesus Christ. But to speak of such an enlightening influence having been received, where sin is still unmortified—O this is either awful hypocrisy, or woful self-deception! No man can, with open face, be beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, who is not, as the effect of that, experiencing a transformation into the same image. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

2. From the subject which has been considered, we learn that PROGRESSION IS A CHARACTER OF THE DIVINE LIFE. A believer is *justified* fully and at once, when by faith he lays hold upon the offered Saviour. There is nothing incomplete, or admitting of greater perfectness, in the deed of grace by which, for Christ's sake, his iniquities are forgiven, and he is received into the favour of the

Most High. But even after he has been justified, and made by adoption a child of God, his sanctification remains imperfect; the method of the divine procedure (which is also consonant to the nature of man) being, to change him, through appropriate moral instrumentality, into a gradual conformity to God, as the text expresses it, "from glory to glory,"—from one degree of glory to another. A stone which has been thrown into the sea, will, by the continual chafing of the tide tossing it hither and thither, have its asperities rubbed off, and become constantly smoother and rounder. So believers, dwelling amidst the sanctifying influence of the truths of revelation, will (it is reasonable to suppose) be ever growing holier and holier. It may be expected that the harshness of sin will, by a gradual process, be worn off from their souls, and that each new year, as it passes by, will leave them not so much the slaves of pride and vanity, of envy and passion, of selfishness and carnality, of ungodliness and discontentment, as it found them. If progression be thus the established character of the divine life—a character necessarily resulting, in all ordinary circumstances, from the peculiar moral instrumentality under which believers live, it follows that there must be something wrong with a believer who is not growing in grace. Do any of us who have professed to believe in God feel that this is our case? Are we making no progress in the divine life,—not dying more and more unto sin, and living unto righteousness? Are we standing still? Are we even going backwards? Have we left our first love? Do our holy affections burn less brightly than they used to do? Do our consciences, like a sensitive plant over which a blight has come, shrink less readily than at an earlier period from the imagination of sin? Is our zeal less active than it used to be? Has the wing of our heavenly-mindedness become enfeebled? Are we drawn to the exercise of divine communion by

a less powerful attraction than in former days? Then we ought to make it matter of immediate and solemn inquiry, what the cause of this may be; and we should resolve, as far as in us lies, to have it removed. O let us not be satisfied unless we are advancing Christians!

3. The subject which has been considered strikingly illustrates THE IMPORTANCE OF ACCURATE CONCEPTIONS OF GOSPEL TRUTH, AND OF FREQUENT MEDITATION UPON THE GOSPEL. Since a believer's progress in conformity to God depends upon his contemplation of the glory of the Lord in the face of Jesus Christ, the degree of progress which he makes will be proportioned to the diligence he uses to obtain correct views of the divine character as revealed through Christ, and to keep these upon his mind. A man who should expect to advance in holiness, and yet should seldom turn his thoughts to the contemplation of the glory of the Lord as mirrored in the Gospel, would, if I may refer to a figure previously employed, resemble an individual who wished to take a daguerreotype of some object, but kept the plate on which the likeness was to be impressed away from the reflection of the object he desired to copy. If the instrumental cause of our sanctification be (as the text declares) the streaming of the rays of God's glory from the face of Jesus Christ upon our souls, how *can* we grow in holiness, except the radiance that emanates from the face of Christ be kept falling upon us? except we make the Gospel of Christ the subject of our frequent, our deep, our serious study, and meditate in it, as David did in the law of the Lord, "day and night"? And because (as the text also declares) means prove effectual only through the accompanying power of the Spirit, pray fervently, pray without ceasing, that the Spirit in his richest and most plenteous influences may be poured down upon your souls,—that he may "dwell with you" and "be in you" for ever!

4. The subject, finally, is not without interest for THE ILLUSTRATION WHICH IT SEEMS TO AFFORD OF THE CONDITION OF GLORIFIED SAINTS HEREAFTER. We have seen that the advancement of believers in conformity to God is effected through their continued contemplation of the glory of the Lord, as he has revealed himself in Jesus Christ. But in heaven there shall be discoveries of God made to the redeemed both more directly and more fully than now. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." "Now we see through a glass,"—through a somewhat opaque medium,—"darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." In some way, of which it is probably impossible for us to form a conception, God shall impart to our souls in the future world discoveries of himself, indefinitely transcending any we are capable of receiving in this state of imperfect knowledge. And, no doubt, to each of the redeemed shall be made throughout eternity ever fresh discoveries of God. For no created mind will ever have attained to the full knowledge of him. What will be the consequence of this? Will it not necessarily be the increasing perfection of the redeemed throughout eternity, not merely in knowledge, but also in every other feature in which they can be assimilated to God? But perhaps we are touching upon topics too high. I shall therefore forbear, and close by merely warning those who are blind or indifferent to the revelation of God given in the person and work of Christ, of the awful doom which hangs over their heads, and which will inevitably overtake them should they continue in their present state. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost."

VIII.

DEATH SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY.

"So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."—1 Cor. xv. 54.

"It is appointed unto men once to die." Such indeed was not our original destiny. Had our first parents retained their integrity, the power of death would not have extended to them or their posterity. But "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Some of the human race, like buds nipped in the moment of their formation, are cut off in infancy; some, like leaves which a violent storm shakes from the tree while they are still green, fall in the freshness and verdure of youth; some are spared to a ripe autumnal age, or even till they reach the wintry period of grey hairs;—but all die sooner or later. Whatever diversity there may be among men in the circumstances of their lives, one grave receives them universally in the end:—just as a multitude of rivers may be imagined running towards a great ocean, and exhibiting the utmost variety in their volumes, in the length of their courses, in the character of the regions through which they flow, in the degree of smoothness or impetuosity with

which they pursue their way, in the utility and fertilising qualities of their waters, and in other respects; but they all terminate at last, and are alike lost, in the ocean. Death spares no class, rich or poor, high or low, learned or unlearned. A heathen poet has said, and said beautifully, "It knocks with impartial foot at the cottage of the peasant and the palace of the king." The good die equally with the bad. Genius gives no exemption from the common fate. The arrows of the destroyer smite those who stand on the pinnacles of glory as well as those whose walk is unnoticed and obscure. A Plato, a Milton, and a Newton have passed away even as others; they have dropped, like falling stars, from the firmament where they shone; and the place that knew them, knows them no more.

While death is thus inevitable, it is likewise, on several accounts, naturally formidable and appalling to the mind. Here, however, an important distinction must be made. To a wicked man there is nothing to counterbalance or mitigate its terrors, but to a Christian there is much; for Jesus has "brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." By his decease, burial, resurrection, and ascension, he has consecrated the tomb and afforded his people at once an example and a pledge of the triumph which they shall obtain over the last enemy. To cheer them in the dark valley they have such precious declarations as these, "Because I live, ye shall live also;" "Where I am, there shall also my servant be;" "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" and once more, in the text, "Death is swallowed up in victory."

In the further prosecution of this subject, I shall *first* mention a few of the circumstances that give death the formidable and appalling character which it naturally has; and *then* point out the manner in which the power and

sting of these are removed in the case of God's people. And may the Holy Spirit direct us in speaking and hearing! May our minds be duly solemnised, and our thoughts ordered aright, while we meditate on a subject of such deep moment!

I. 1. First of all then, among the circumstances which give death a formidable and appalling character, I would mention *the violent separation of soul and body, with the dissolution of the latter.*

The Scriptures in speaking of the human frame describe it as "curiously wrought," and again as "fearfully and wonderfully made." The body is indeed a piece of workmanship of an amazing kind. When we look at it simply as a machine in which every thing desired is accomplished in the most perfect way; when we consider the variety of ends to be served by its different parts, the delicacies of contrivance used to effect these, and the manner in which each part brings about its own purpose without interfering with the operation of any other; when we take into account, besides this, its fitness to be a habitation for the rational soul, and reflect upon the mysterious link that unites the spiritual principle to the corporeal, upon the sympathy that subsists between these, and the way in which each reacts upon its fellow,—the destruction of the body cannot but appear to us in the light of an evil to be deprecated. It is not, nor ever can be, a matter of indifference to us in itself, however other considerations may alter or modify our feeling—yet *in itself* it cannot be a matter of indifference that the earthly house of this tabernacle should be dissolved; that an edifice built with such surpassing wisdom, with which the living soul has been so closely connected for a series of years, which has been the vehicle of its sensations, the minister of its volitions, an instrument whose strings have vibrated in unison to its every emotion, should fall to pieces, lose every vestige of the rare organi-

zation by which it is distinguished, and moulder into dust. The prospect of going down to the grave and saying to "corruption, Thou art my father, and to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister," is one from which humanity instinctively shrinks.

The very pain, too, with which the dissolution of the body is usually accompanied adds to the natural repugnance with which we anticipate that event. There are different degrees of physical agony in death, according to the particular disease by which an individual is cut off. And in some cases persons die as calmly as if they were but falling asleep,—no pang is endured,—no struggle is experienced,—no feature is distorted. Such cases, however, are the exceptions. As a general rule it is painful to die. The loosening of the cords of life,—the tearing away of the spirit from its mansion of clay, are, for the most part, things of exceeding agony; and, constituted as we are, the knowledge of this fact inevitably heightens the aversion with which, in any case, we should have been disposed to regard the breaking up of the bodily system.

2. But, secondly, among the circumstances which give death a formidable and appalling character I would mention this,—that *it removes us from familiar earthly enjoyments.* I do not here speak of vicious indulgences, to which the name of pleasure has been erroneously given, for in the eye of right reason there would be nothing to be regretted in our separation from these; but I speak of the many enjoyments of a lawful kind with which the earth is stored,—enjoyments which, the more that a person is devoted to the service of his Maker he will relish the more; and from which, if his human sympathies are in proper play, he cannot but feel it an unwelcome thing to be torn.

Whatever admiration we may have for the frame of spirit that often makes saints long ardently for heaven,

we must view with utter and unmingled reprobation the frame of spirit that sometimes makes individuals displeased with earth. "Truly," said Solomon, "the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is to behold the sun." "Not for that we would be unclothed," was the language of one whose aspirations after celestial felicity were as high and as constant as those of any other man that ever breathed. All—all at least whose feelings are in a healthy state—love life, and cling to it with tenacity; and that, not merely because to do so is an original dictate of our nature, implanted in it for wise purposes by the great Creator, but likewise on account of the enjoyment that has been experienced during life, and which, according to a common law of suggestion, associates itself in the mind with the idea of prolonged existence. The thought of dying comes to be felt as identical with the thought of leaving much to which the heart has grown attached,—of having converse no more with beloved friends,—of walking no more in paths which our feet have delighted to tread,—of seeing no more scenes on which our eyes have rejoiced to look,—of hearing no more sounds and voices that have been wont to charm our ears,—of drawing water no more from wells of pure and innocent gratification at which we have been accustomed to drink. I grant that there are associations on the other side; for life has its sorrows as well as its joys, and oftentimes the latter are both dark and protracted—so much so, that the world has been poetically described as "a vale of tears." But, poetry apart, there are few persons, probably no Christians, in whose lives happiness does not unspeakably preponderate over misery; and, at all events, this I imagine to be certain, that though under the immediate pressure of distress an individual may exclaim: "I would not live always," and may express a desire to be taken out of a world where he is suffering so much, yet when death does actually draw

nigh, the tendency of the mind, in all but a very few cases indeed, is to forget the shadows by which past years have been darkened, to look to the enjoyment which life may still possibly have in store, to fix attention on the ties that bind to earth rather than on circumstances that repel from it, and to wish that (if it were the will of God) life might, for the sake of these ties, be yet prolonged a little season. It were contradicting all experience to deny that one cause of the repugnance felt to dying is, that whatever plans we are pursuing, death puts a stop to them; whatever temporal hopes we are cherishing, death extinguishes them; in whatever fields of terrestrial felicity we are finding enjoyment, death removes us from them; whatever attachments unite us to any of our fellow-men, parents or children, brothers or sisters, husbands or wives, death breaks them all asunder.

3. But once more, among the circumstances which render death naturally formidable and appalling to the mind, we must mention this, that *it calls the immortal spirit to its final account.* While a man is in this world, he is in the place of hope. If impenitent and unconverted, the door of reconciliation is still open; invitations are addressed to him to return, and the assurance is held out that if he do repent and seek the Lord through the appointed Mediator, he shall be forgiven and accepted:

> "As long as life its term extends,
> Hope's blest dominion never ends;
> For while the lamp holds on to burn,
> The greatest sinner may return."

But death puts an end to this state of things. It closes the day of grace. It seals the sinner's doom. It removes the soul from the sphere of probation to the bar of judgment.

This is without doubt the main cause of the apprehension which so generally arises in the view of leaving this world. Dissolution would be divested of by far the great-

est part of its terrors, could it be disconnected from the thought of that judgment to which it leads. The circumstances which I previously mentioned,—namely, the dissolution of the mortal tenement in which the spirit has so long resided, and our departure from all that has been felt to be dear on earth,—would certainly, even were there nothing else to be considered, give death a repulsive character. But these, after all, are trifles in comparison with the idea of the reckoning awaiting us beyond the tomb. Nothing can be imagined more awful than the position of an ungodly man when fatal sickness arrests him, like the avenger of blood overtaking the tardy manslayer; and when he starts up from a state of previous security to a full consciousness of the change that must soon pass upon him. He looks backwards, and he perceives a misspent life stretching away; forwards, and he beholds a tribunal rising at which he has no plea that he can offer for himself. Methinks I see the outline of the gaunt form of the King of Terrors (in such a case how truly called so!) bending over him as he tosses on his fevered bed, and giving to his physical agony an indescribable aggravation by sounding this alarm in his ears—'Prepare, O sinner, to meet thy God: I come to carry thee to the presence of Him whose laws thou hast broken, whose mercy thou hast despised, whose justice thou must now experience!'

With these remarks agree the words of the apostle immediately following our text. "O death," he says, "where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" And then he adds, "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law." The main thing that renders death formidable, that which constitutes its sting, is the consciousness of sin. Sin has power to render death thus formidable, in consequence of its exposing to the penalty of the law. Death carries the sinner to that tribunal where his violation of the law of God shall receive its reward. And

the instinctive fear of death which is experienced by the ungodly, is just the fear of criminals, dreading a trial at which they feel that the evidence against them shall be irresistible, and the sentence one which it will be impossible for them to evade.

II. Having thus mentioned a few of the circumstances which naturally make death formidable and appalling, I proceed, as proposed, secondly, to point out the manner in which the power and sting of these are removed in the case of God's people. "Death," we are told, "is swallowed up in victory."

1. And first, *with regard to the fears occasioned by a sense of guilt which naturally fill the mind in the prospect of death, Christians are for the most part enabled, by divine grace, to rise superior to these.* Of the fact that they have sinned, and sinned grievously, they indeed are fully sensible. They know the sentence which the law denounces against transgressors. They know that they have no plea arising from any thing in themselves, or done by themselves, which can entitle them to exemption from that sentence. But they believe that Jesus has paid the price of his people's redemption, that his blood possesses an unbounded efficacy to take away sin, and that none who trust in him can perish; and, therefore, being conscious of having fled to Jesus, they have no servile dread of the divine wrath. Now when you find a person enjoying an enlightened and solid peace in the agonies of dissolution; when you see him, amidst extreme bodily weakness and the pain attending nature's last struggle, calmly directing his eye to futurity, fully realising his position, certain that in a few days (or perhaps hours) he will be in the presence of his Maker, and yet remaining without the shadow of apprehension; when you perceive him resting in security, not because he is free from sin, or ignorant of what sin

deserves, but because he is looking to a crucified Saviour, and trusting in the gracious promises of the Most High, —do you not feel that you are witnessing a practical and most delightful illustration of the statement of our text, "Death is swallowed up in victory?"

I am aware that the experience of believers in their last hours is not always such as I have described. Many who are undoubted Christians are by no means free from apprehension in the prospect of ~~that~~ their change; and their triumph over the alarms natural to a guilty conscience at the approach of the hour of reckoning may seem to be less complete. But perhaps the difference is more in appearance than in reality; for the anxiety as to his state which ~~such~~ a believer may feel is widely removed from the terrors experienced by an unbeliever. The latter is agonised because he knows that he is without hope; the former is only anxious lest he should be too easily satisfying himself that his hope is a good one. I suppose that in the case of the Christian who is troubled with doubts, there is, notwithstanding these doubts, a real peace at bottom, a true confidence in the Saviour supporting the soul. He dare not be so bold as to use the language of full assurance; yet at least a measure of assurance is his, such a measure as gives a tone to the emotions and exercises of his mind.

But even if the triumph of believers in the hour of their decease over the fears of guilt were less frequent and decided than it is, the great fact would remain, that all such fears in their case are groundless. The reality of the victory is not to be estimated by the conqueror's apprehensions of the matter; and whether Christians realise it or not, death is to them an unstinged foe; for the promise is sure, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit."

2. But secondly, *with regard to the separation from*

all terrestrial enjoyments which takes place at death, consider how this is made up for, in the case of the believer, by his entering into the blessedness of heaven. He leaves a world in which undeniably there is much of beauty and delight; but only to exchange it for one where there is infinitely more. He leaves a world which many a star illumines with its beams of joy; but only to become the inhabitant of one which the glory of the Lord lightens,—lightens with a splendour that causes it to have no need of sun, or moon, or stars. Life here below was felt to be sweet, distracted though it was by the variety of sorrows incident to humanity; but O how much sweeter shall it be to live where there is nothing to distract, no curse; where sorrow and sighing have for ever fled away; where a pang never wounds the heart, a sob never agitates the breast, a tear never dims the eye!—I stand beside the bed of a dying saint. The spirit is gone; but has it suffered by the change? A moment ago it was with us: now it is with God. It has ceased to have any part in terrestrial things; but it has begun to be occupied with celestial. It shall taste no more the fruits of earth; but it is where the better fruits of paradise grow. It felt it grievous to break the ties by which it was so closely united to beloved friends in the flesh; but its removal from them was its introduction into another society, the society of angels and of the spirits of the just made perfect. A moment ago it loved a Saviour whom it knew only by faith: now it is acquainted with that Saviour by direct vision. It has been for ever delivered from the dominion of iniquity and made pure as Christ is pure. The crown incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading, which heretofore it had only in expectation, it now holds in possession. Attached surviving friends are weeping around the cold and pulseless clay, the deserted abode which, on its invisible wings, the immortal guest has just quitted; but the redeemed on high with their harps

of gold are singing hallelujahs, to welcome the arrival at the realms of bliss of an addition to their number. Has death obtained a conquest here? or rather is not death in such a case itself "swallowed up in victory?"

3. But finally, *with regard to the separation of the soul from the body and the dissolution of the latter, this too shall be repaired, and more than repaired, at the resurrection morn.*

The grave shall not always retain the bodies of God's saints. These bodies shall in due time be raised, as that of the Redeemer's was. "This is the will of Him that sent me," Jesus himself declares, "that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." And how far shall the body with which a believer is raised surpass that which he now wears! Let the chapter testify from which our text is taken. "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." The fair and curious edifice, therefore, which death destroys shall be reared again, but reared in a more magnificent manner, so as to be suitable to the perfected sinless spirit by which it is to be inhabited. The casket shall be made richer, to correspond with the augmented excellence of the jewel. It will be as though a peasant residing in a humble cottage were raised to the dignity of a prince, and his cottage thereupon were thrown down and a marble palace erected for his habitation in its room. The most splendid palace on earth does not differ from the meanest cottage, so much as the body in which a saint is destined to stand before the throne above differs from that with which he is clothed at present.

The illustration of the words before us which shall be afforded at the resurrection shall be public, signal, and

complete. When we think of the countless multitudes who once lived and acted here, but now "sleep in the dust," and of the countless multitudes more whom the same fate shall yet befall; when we consider how populous the tomb already is, and how much more populous it is constantly becoming, a sort of melancholy feeling is apt to steal over the mind, as though every thing were being swallowed up and irrecoverably lost in the victorious jaws of death. But if we reflect again on the spectacle which the resurrection day shall present, when, "at the voice of the archangel and the trump of God," the gates of the grave shall be burst asunder, and the bodies of the millions of the redeemed who have lived in the different ages of the world shall arise in their new and radiant forms, and each spiritualised and beautified body shall become reunited to the soul whose sinless emotions it is perfectly adapted to express, reunited to it to be separated no more for ever,—we shall be convinced that over God's people death obtains, even in respect of the dissolution of the mortal part, only a seeming triumph; and that the Destroyer himself shall in the end be "swallowed up in victory."

1. This subject is directly adapted to strengthen and cheer believers in the prospect of dissolution. We have seen that death,—the thought of which cannot be otherwise than disagreeable and painful to ungodly men,—is, in every point of view, to the Christian an unstinged foe. Those, therefore, who are in Jesus Christ, and are able to realise their interest in him, may be of good cheer, even when feeling most unmistakably the tokens of their approaching end. There is no cause, my Christian friends, why you should "through fear of death" be at all "subject to bondage;" since your Saviour has, "through death, destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil," and delivered you from the condemnation which

in yourselves, you merited. But ere an individual can be warranted to comfort himself with the truths that have been expounded, he must have satisfactory grounds for concluding that he is a Christian. "It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs." This suggests the solemn personal inquiry to each of us,—What is *my* state? Does "the Spirit itself bear witness with my spirit that I am a child of God"? Do I feel conscious, as far as I know my own heart, that I have complied with the call, "Be reconciled to God"? Am I trusting in the atoning blood of God's dear Son for pardon and acceptance? Do I give that evidence of the genuineness of my faith to which the apostle refers when he says, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature"? Do I show that I "live in the Spirit," by "also walking in the Spirit"? Am I really, in any proper sense of the words, bringing forth "the fruit of the Spirit," which is "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance"? Let us try our state, dear brethren, by considerations like these. And if, notwithstanding a sense of much remaining unbelief and sin, of which the best among us will be the first to make humble confession, we do see reason to hope that we are the children of God—in that case (not otherwise) may we feel that death is divested of its natural terrors.

2. Need I point out the application of our subject to the case of such as may be mourning the loss of pious relatives removed from them by death?

"Take comfort, Christians, when your friends
In Jesus fall asleep;
Their better being never ends;
Why then dejected weep?

"Why inconsolable, as those
To whom no hope is given?
Death is the messenger of peace,
And calls the soul to heaven.

"As Jesus died, and rose again
Victorious from the dead;
So his disciples rise, and reign
With their triumphant Head.

"The time draws nigh, when from the clouds
Christ shall with shouts descend,
And the last trumpet's awful voice
The heavens and earth shall rend.

"Then they who live shall changed be,
And they who sleep shall wake;
The graves shall yield their ancient charge,
And earth's foundations shake.

"The saints of God, from death set free,
With joy shall mount on high;
The heavenly hosts with praises loud
Shall meet them in the sky.

"A few short years of evil past,
We reach the happy shore,
Where death-divided friends at last
Shall meet to part no more."

3. But what shall I now say to those who are without an interest in Jesus? O, my friends, bethink you that you too must die; and consider what sort of an end yours will be, if you continue impenitent and unbelieving. What terrible remembrances will crowd upon your minds as the sands of life run out,—remembrances of open and secret sins, of forbidden indulgences, of neglected duties, of despised privileges, of convictions resisted, and Gospel offers rejected! What terrible anticipations likewise will arise before your view—the great white throne, the Judge, the place of woe, the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched! Say, do you wish such images of horror from the past and the future to gather around you when you are in the grasp of the last enemy? If not, be wise; and in this the season of your merciful visitation, "acquaint yourselves with God, and be at peace." Are you allowing time and its concerns to banish eternity from your serious thoughts? Ah! on a death-bed, you will

judge more correctly. You will then see time dwindled down to its proper stature; and eternity standing out in immense proportions. When persons come to die, there is but one question that is commonly felt to be of much importance; the question, 'Am I at peace with God through Jesus Christ?' O, lay that question to heart now! Betake yourselves to Christ this day. Trust in him as your Saviour; devote yourselves to him as your master; and so in your case, too, death, when he comes, as come he must, shall come disrobed of every thing dreadful. In your case, too, "shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."

IX.

THE SANCTIFIER AND THE SANCTIFIED ALL OF ONE.

"For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one."—HEB. ii. 11.

THE term *sanctify* signifies to set apart; in particular, to set apart from a common to a sacred purpose. Those described in the text as SANCTIFIED are the people of Christ; and this description is most appropriate, inasmuch as they are set apart from the mass of mankind, brought into a blessed relation to God as his children, and dedicated to his service, for which they are at the same time fitted by the renewal of their naturally depraved hearts. They are saints, separated ones; "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that they should show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light." "We know," writes the apostle John, very distinctly exhibiting believers as persons set apart from other men,—"We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." THE SANCTIFIER is Christ. Solely to him is their separation from the world, whether in respect of the condemnation resting upon it, or of the pollution defiling it, attributable. They "are washed, they are sanctified, they are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of their God." "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might

sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

"He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." Were we interpreting these words without a reference to the context, there are various senses which we might put upon them. Christ and his people might be said to be of one, because of his legal identification with them; their sins being imputed to him, and his righteousness to them. God "hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Or the words might be used as expressive of that union between Christ and his people emblematically represented under the figure of the vine and its branches, in virtue of which his grace is imparted to their souls, to enable them to bring forth fruit unto God, the fruit of a holy conversation. Or (though this is not very different from what has just been stated) the words might be explained as teaching that Christ and his people are animated by one Spirit; the Spirit, with which he was anointed without measure, being poured out upon them likewise. Or, in short, Christ and his people might be said to be all of one, because, while he is the Son of God, they too have received power to become the sons of God, have been adopted into the family in which Christ is Elder Brother.

These are all precious doctrines, but I do not mean to dwell upon them, because, though the words of the text considered in themselves would admit of the interpretation given, the idea directly in the apostle's mind was different from any that have been mentioned. His meaning is that the Sanctifier and the sanctified are all of one in respect of nature. Christ possesses a nature identical with ours. Like us, he is a man. To show that this is the apostle's meaning, it will be sufficient, without giving a particular

statement of the argument of the chapter, to read the text in its connection with the three following verses. "Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me. Forasmuch then."—These words, "forasmuch then," are like a finger pointing back to the previous statement (that of our text), and indicating that it is about to be substantially repeated. Mark the language in which the repetition is made: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." The meaning of our text, therefore, is, that Christ and his people are all of one, because, they being partakers of flesh and blood, he also took part of the same; they being men, he became a man too, by assuming their nature into connection with his eternal divine nature. And the doctrines to which I referred,—the legal identification of believers with Christ,—their union to him as the source of gracious influence,—their participation of the Spirit which rested upon him,—their being made members of the family of God, that great association into which all the redeemed are incorporated in him;—these doctrines, I say, which the text in itself might be considered as fitly expressing, are involved in it, only in that indirect manner in which every important gospel truth is linked with others which it presupposes, or which flow from it by necessary inference.

In further addressing you on the subject thus brought out, I shall, *first*, offer a few remarks on the fact announced, that Christ the Sanctifier, and his people the sanctified, are of one nature; and then point out, *secondly*, what seem to be the principal ends served by this in the economy of redemption.

I. First, the fact announced: Christ the Sanctifier and the people whom he sanctifies are of one nature. He was a man like ourselves, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh.

The true and proper humanity of Christ has been denied in various forms. Some, in the early ages of Christianity, led astray by a false philosophy, supposed that his body had no real existence; but that it was only a phantom, and that his sufferings and death were mere appearances. Others believed that, while he possessed a body, he had no human soul, its place being supplied by the divine nature. And others, denying his divinity, yet not able to resist the force of those passages which speak of him as more than man, imagined that his corporeal frame was animated by an angelic spirit. In opposition to such errors, which wear a fantastic character on their face, the Scriptures teach that the Son of God assumed a nature in all essential respects such as we possess; that he had a body similar in its constitution to those of other men, and a rational spirit of the same substantial character with our own. If I here advert to some of the visible circumstances of our Lord's appearance and condition in the world, which mark him indubitably as one of our species, it is not so much to prove as to illustrate the point in question,—not so much to establish what is doubted, as by the specification of particulars to impress a received truth upon the mind, and to help you to realise the relation into which the Saviour has come to us.

"When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman." The Saviour did not come down from heaven to earth, by outward visible descent, in a body already prepared and fully matured; but he was born of a human mother, so as (though miraculously conceived) to be in the most literal sense her seed. He entered upon this terrestrial scene in all the accustomed helplessness of infancy. Wrapped in swaddling clothes and

laid in a manger, he presented to the shepherds who, upon the angelic intimation of his nativity, had hastened to behold "the desire of all nations," nothing different from what they would have seen in the person of an ordinary humble babe. He grew up and was nourished at the same fountain at which other infants drink. His lips

> "drew milk
> As sweet as charity from human breasts."

His body was composed of material elements, and was palpable to every sense. "Handle me," he said to his disciples when they saw him walking upon the sea, and were afraid, thinking that they perceived a spirit—"handle me, and see that it is I myself; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have." He was subject, like other men, to hunger and thirst, to fatigue and pain; and had need of the same natural repose which they require to recruit their frames. Witness the advantage which Satan endeavoured to obtain over him in the desert, by appealing to the cravings of his appetite: "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." Witness the occasion when, "wearied with his journey," he sat upon the well of Jacob at Samaria. Witness the storm on lake Gennesaret, amidst all the violence of which—so exhausted was he with his previous labours—he lay "in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow." Or witness the fatal hour when he was condemned to carry his cross to the place of execution, and was found unable, through lack of strength to do so, but tottered beneath the load, and at length sank under its pressure to the ground.

While thus manifesting in his bodily constitution the frailty of our nature, he likewise exhibited every mental characteristic of humanity:

> "He thought, articulated, smiled, and wept."

His intellectual faculties were gradually developed in the same manner with those of common children. Like an

odoriferous plant, giving forth a richer and more abundant fragrance as it rises to its full growth, the gifts and graces of his nature unfolded themselves progressively, and caused their ineffable sweetness to be more distinctly perceived as he advanced from infancy to mature life. "He grew in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man." What affection of which he was at any time the subject, what act done, or word spoken, or emotion displayed by him, did not perfectly accord with the familiar and expressive designation, "the Son of man," by which he was wont to speak of himself, as if claiming kindred with us? Was it not a human heart which pitied the widow of Nain while she mournfully followed the bier of her only son to the last resting-place? Was it not a human cheek down which the tears ran beside the grave of Lazarus, and a human tongue which faltered, as it gave utterance to the words, "Where have ye laid him?" Was it not a human eye from which the gleam of triumph flashed, as it beheld, in anticipation, "Satan as lightning fall from heaven"? Our Lord had, like other men, his peculiar friendships and attachments. Treachery and ingratitude, manifested by those in whom he had reposed confidence, or whom he had honoured by special tokens of his affection, deeply wounded him. Hypocrisy and other forms of vice awakened the thunder of his indignation, though that sentiment in him was purified from any admixture of malignity or personal ill-will. He shrank instinctively, just as we would do, from suffering, even while going forward voluntarily, and with an unchanging heart, to the endurance of it. And, at the same time, with the genuine feelings of a man, he was cheered under his agonies by the prospect of the promised reward.

No reliance can be placed upon descriptions, if He of whom these things were written did not possess a true and proper human nature.

There are two remarks which must be added to what has been said. 1. The first is, that Christ is not a mere man. He is very God, at the same time that he is very man. The names, the attributes, the actions, the worship, which belong only to the supreme God, are in the Scriptures expressly and repeatedly ascribed to him. He is declared to be the Holy, Holy, Holy Lord of hosts, of whose glory the whole earth is full,—the Word which was in the beginning with God, himself God,—God over all, blessed for ever,—the true God and eternal life,—the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the Lord which was and is and is to come, the Almighty,—the Searcher of the reins and hearts,—the Being by whom, and for whom, all things were created, and in whom all things consist,—the object of the ceaseless ascriptions of blessing and honour and glory and power, which are proceeding from the redeemed on high. The doctrine of "God made manifest in the flesh" is certainly mysterious; and the mystery attaching to it I do not profess to be able in the least degree to remove. "Who can by searching find out God?" "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain unto it." But with humility and reverence I receive what the Word of God teaches. I do not doubt its revelations on any matter, merely because they transcend the grasp of my mind. In particular, I do not, for such a reason, question the Saviour's divinity, considering, as I do, that a denial of that vital article would change the light and harmony of the gospel system into more than chaotic darkness and confusion—would rob the Gospel of whatever is peculiar in it; as the removal of the keystone of an arch brings down the whole structure which it combines—and would, in fact, leave mankind sinners without the semblance of a Gospel at all.

2. The other remark which I have to add is, that while

the Sanctifier is of one nature with the sanctified, he is distinguished from them by being without sin. He was born immaculate, and he continued so throughout his life. The testimony of Scripture is, that he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." Perfect sinlessness was obviously necessary, in order to the perfection of the Redeemer's sacrifice. Hence we read that he "offered himself without spot to God;" and again, that we have not been redeemed "with corruptible things, as silver and gold, ... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." The least taint of sin in our Lord's human nature would not only have rendered his sacrifice worthless, but would even have been an insuperable bar to that union of his human nature with the divine, which his sacrifice presupposes. Darkness, even in the least degree, could not have been linked to ineffable light. Most wonderful was it in any circumstances, that the eternal glory of the Godhead should be united to what was created and finite; but it never could, by possibility, have been united to what was sinful.

II. This brings me to the second part of my subject, in which I was to point out what seem to be the principal ends in the scheme of redemption served by the identity of Christ's nature with that of his people.

1. And the first that I would mention is, that *by being one in nature with them, he was able to suffer for their sins.* In the verse preceding our text, a fundamental principle bearing on this point is expressed in very remarkable terms. "It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." There are some courses of procedure which it may be said with truth—though we cannot use such language too reverently—*would not become God.* It would not be-

come him to act in a manner at variance with the dictates of essential justice. It would not become him, as the Moral Governor of his creatures, to give them a law, and to remain indifferent whether they kept it or broke it. It would not become him to cast dishonour on his law, by allowing its penal sanctions to fall to the ground, like empty fulminations. It would not become him to license iniquity by permitting it to go unpunished. It was therefore necessary for God, on his graciously determining to save sinners, to make provision for reconciling their salvation with the claims of law and justice and with the interests of his own holy government. But it would seem that no method of effecting this object was possible, except the method of vicarious atonement. A surety, able and willing to perform such a part, and divinely appointed to the work, must bear our sins and suffer the penalty in our room. "Without shedding of blood is no remission." Here then lay the primary necessity for Christ's assumption of humanity. In order that he might be a Saviour, it behoved him to suffer—which, as God, he could not do. And though, as far as mere suffering is concerned, *that* might have been endured in any created nature; yet, by his assuming our nature rather than another, such an affinity was established between him and us as was proper when he was about to die for us. There is a suitableness which the mind intuitively recognises in the Redeemer of a fallen world being the kinsman of those whom he redeems. The majesty of the divine law is more effectually vindicated than it could otherwise be, when its precepts are obeyed and its penalty endured by a member of the same family in which it was outraged. Hence the statement, already quoted in part, by which our text is followed: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is,

the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of* angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." He became one of us, that he might be wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, and have the chastisement of our peace laid upon him,—that he might be rejected and set at nought, and scourged, and buffeted, and spit upon, and crowned with thorns, for us,—that he might for us experience the malignity of Satan, and be the object of the tempter's harassing though unsuccessful assaults,—might, in our stead, drink the bitter agonising cup of his Father's displeasure, endure the anguish of Gethsemane, bow his head and give up the ghost on Calvary.

2. In the second place, *He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified being all of one, he was enabled to set them an example of holy living.*

Let me state distinctly the place which the example of our Lord holds in the scheme of redemption.

The ultimate object of Christ's interposition on our behalf was to purify our souls from iniquity, and to form us to a holy character. He did not aim merely at delivering us from wrath,—that was doubtless indispensable; rather, however, as a means towards the end, than as the end itself. The final result which he contemplated was our sanctification. Again; in our sanctification, instrumentality of a moral kind, suited to our rational natures, is employed. We are not made holy, apart from the influence of means and moral suasives naturally adapted to change those on whom they act into the image of the

* These words, *the nature of*, are not in the original. The proper rendering of the clause is, "He helped not angels, but he helped the seed of Abraham" Still, it is clear from the context, that the help rendered was such as necessarily involved the assumption, on the part of the Saviour, of the same nature with those who were the objects of his gracious aid.

Lord "from glory to glory." Now here is the place where the example of Christ comes in. It is a part of the moral instrumentality employed by the Holy Spirit for our sanctification. There was a deeper reason for Christ's manifestation in the flesh than to set us an example of obedience. He appeared, as has been already said, "to give himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour." But it was quite in harmony with his work of atonement,—it was furnishing a subsidiary means towards the accomplishment of the great design of his atonement, a means which, though subsidiary, was still very important, that while he dwelt on earth he exhibited a living pattern of every branch of excellence.

"He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." Had it been otherwise, he could have been no example to us. He could not have said, "Learn of me;" nor could the inspired writers have directed believers to him as the embodiment of that perfection after which they should constantly aspire. But what a model do we enjoy in the record of his life! how luminous, how distinct, how various in the aspects it presents, and in every aspect faultless! Do we wish a pattern of filial duty? Let us think of Jesus, subject in childhood to his parents; and, even amid the darkness of his last moments, tenderly remembering his mother, and commending her to the care of the beloved disciple. Do we desire a pattern of benevolence? Let us contemplate Jesus ever doing good, healing diseases, feeding the hungry, labouring for the spiritual welfare of all with whom he came in contact, weeping over lost and perishing souls. Do we seek a pattern of meekness? Let us turn to Jesus; and behold him reviled, yet not reviling again,—suffering without one threat,—"brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep dumb before her shearers, not opening his mouth." Do we want a pattern of spirituality? It is furnished by Jesus, whose

thoughts were not so much occasionally turned to divine things, as habitually engrossed with them,—who spent whole nights in solitary prayer,—the opening of whose lips

"Was even as though an angel shook his wings,"

diffusing a fragrance that made the very air around redolent of heaven. Would we (to instance but another grace out of the many that might be dwelt upon) have a pattern of resignation? Let us call up before our view the scene in the garden, where—his soul being exceeding sorrowful even unto death, and the sweat falling like great drops of blood from his body—he thrice exclaimed, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" adding, however, on each occasion, "nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

3. But in the third and last place, *our Lord's identity of nature with his people has fitted him to sympathise with them in their afflictions.*

The plan of saving sinners through a Mediator being supposed, it was obviously in the highest degree desirable, if not indispensably requisite, that he who filled that office should be able to sympathise with those whose case was committed to him. Sympathy is not indeed formally and essentially included in the office of a mediator: it is an incidental circumstance. A mediator devoid of sympathy for his people may be conceived. I do not say that such a thing is actually possible: probably not. I only mean that it may be conceived in thought. The ideas of mediation, and of sympathy in the breast of the mediator for the guilty parties, are distinguishable. But had the High Priest of our profession, the Mediator betwixt God and us, been incapable of being touched with the feeling of our infirmities, what would have been the consequence? We would not have been able to "come boldly," as now, "unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace

to help in time of need." Our consciousness that the Saviour was removed in every respect to an infinite distance from us—that he was one with whom we had not, and never could have, aught in common—would have deterred us from betaking ourselves to him, as our advocate with the Father. It would have tended to check the running out of our hearts and affections towards his person, and to abate our confidence in him. It would have placed a certain constraint upon our souls, and made us feel as if we could not cling habitually to him—and this, even though the divine promises, warranting us to make him our trust, had been of the strongest and most distinct description.

Now the capacity of Christ to sympathise with his people results from the circumstance of his being a partaker of their nature. This was in a measure foreshadowed under the Old Testament dispensation, in the fact that the priests who, as types of the Saviour, officiated in the temple, were taken from among the people for whom their offerings were presented, and were sharers of their infirmities. "Who" (the Jewish high priest) "can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity. And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins." The parallel, indeed, is not strictly perfect; because Jesus had no sins for which atonement required to be made. But he was subject, in his human nature, to all sinless infirmities; so that, while performing the work of our High Priest, he can do it, and we are able to feel that he can do it, not in an uninterested manner, but sympathisingly, knowing the weakness and sorrows of humanity from personal experience. "We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

No one can have a fellow-feeling with us in those

trials to which, as men, we are subject, except one who is himself a man. In such trials we cannot enjoy the sympathy of angels. They may see the people of God encompassed with various tribulations, and may pity the sorrow which they behold, but they cannot sympathise with the sufferers. There is a difference between mere pity and that peculiar modification of it which we term sympathy. A being of a superior nature, who is not able, from any experience of his own, to enter into our feelings, may pity human affliction: but we should not say that he sympathised with us, unless he could from his own experience,—experience of afflictions similar to those which we endure,—place himself (so to speak) precisely in our position, and fully understand what we bear. This experience it is plainly impossible that he can ever have. The possessor of one nature cannot be conscious of experience peculiar to another nature. A seraph, in the lofty sphere in which he moves, where there is nothing but brightness, nothing but felicity, no distresses, no fear, no sense of danger, no gloom occasioned by divine desertion, cannot have a knowledge of those peculiar states of mind in which we most need the assistance of a tender and sympathising friend; at least he can have no such knowledge as is necessary to give him a fellow-feeling in our pains. If therefore Christ and his people had not been "all of one;" if he had taken upon him (suppose) the nature of angels, we could not have enjoyed his sympathy. But having assumed our nature, and tabernacled with men upon earth,—having been not only a man, but a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; he is qualified by what he has himself endured to sympathise with his people in their trials.

The experience of suffering, by which our Lord was fitted to be a sympathising High Priest to his people, was very wide and varied. He "was *in all points* tempted like as we are." It might be straining this language to

say that there was absolutely no kind of affliction that Jesus did not suffer. Universal terms must be interpreted with a certain latitude. But the words quoted teach at all events that our Lord's experience of calamity was very great. His life was one of poverty and hardship. He knew what it was to be hungry and athirst, and oftentimes without a home. He could say, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." We know that he underwent in his last hours, if not on earlier occasions, much bodily pain. His death, physically considered, was one of the most excruciating kind. Whatever distress a holy compassionate nature can receive from being misunderstood and misrepresented by sinful, prejudiced men, and from having all its efforts for their good met by general neglect or contumely, fell to the lot of Jesus. He was the object of the bitter hatred of the world; the sword of whose persecution, drawn against him in his infancy, never ceased to pursue his steps till the close of his career. His sensitive heart was made to bleed by the ingratitude and desertion of friends; one even of his chosen apostles having denied him with oaths and with curses, and another having betrayed him for thirty pieces of silver into the hands of those who sought his life. He wept beside the grave of Lazarus. He was tempted of the devil. And above all, he was subjected to the unutterable anguish of divine desertion; his Father having hid his face from him on the cross, and caused him to feel, in the total eclipse of spiritual comfort which then came upon his soul, the full meaning of that awful sentence, "The wages of sin is death."

I have thus, as proposed, first offered some remarks on the fact announced in the text, that Jesus and his people, the Sanctifier and the sanctified, are of one nature. Like them, he is a man, though not a mere man, nor defiled

like other men with sin. I have next pointed out what seem to be the principal ends served by our Lord's assumption of humanity. He became, in this way, capable of suffering as our surety, of leaving us an example that we should follow his steps, and of sympathising with us in our afflictions. What is the practical improvement that ought to be made of the subject?

1. In the first place, *how should believers admire the condescension and mercy of Christ, as manifested in his assumption of human nature!* "Will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth?" Such was the exclamation of Solomon at the dedication of the temple, when Jehovah manifested his presence by a visible symbol, and his glory filled the house. But with how much greater force may the language be employed in reference to the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ!—"Will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth?" Yes, he has done so. The Second Person of the blessed Trinity, he "who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." When the mind attempts to measure the amount of such condescension, it is swallowed up and lost. And it was for the gracious purpose of saving us from the state of guilt and sin into which we had fallen, that Christ came in the flesh! The mercy displayed in his assumption of our nature, was equal to the condescension of that act. We were utterly unworthy of any favour at his hand. We deserved nothing but wrath. Yet he stooped from heaven to earth for our redemption. This union of condescenion and mercy is strikingly suggested in the clause immediately following our text: "For which cause *he is not ashamed* to call them brethren." When

shame, or the possibility of it, is attributed to Christ, the words are (of course) used after the manner of men. A person occupying an elevated position on earth is often ashamed to notice those who are greatly his inferiors. Most persons, too, are ashamed to have any connection with one who has been guilty of reproachful conduct. Adopting a mode of speech founded on these facts, we may well say, that every reason existed for Christ's being ashamed of us. If we consider our insignificance, as contrasted with his essential dignity; but especially if to the thought of our insignificance we add that of our demerit, we must stand amazed at finding ourselves admitted into any association with him. Methinks that, after the fall, every holy angel who had previously walked as a companion with man, would feel a sensation of shame even at the recollection of his former intimacy with the apostate race. Yet the Lord of angels did not turn away his face from us,—did not disdain to assume our nature, and to identify himself with us in the closest manner! He became the Son of man, that we might be made sons of God. Let our thoughts often, my Christians friends, dwell upon this subject, till we catch something of the fire that warmed the heart of the beloved disciple when he said, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

2. In the second place, *how readily and thankfully should unconverted sinners avail themselves of the way of reconciliation to God, which has been opened up by the incarnation and atoning death of Christ!* Dear brethren, (I speak now to such as may still be in an unconverted, Christless state) my theme this day has been the assumption of our nature by the eternal Son of God; and I described the primary necessity for his manifestation in the

flesh, as arising from the holy and righteous character of Jehovah, which rendered it impossible for him to pardon sin, except on the ground of a sufficient sacrifice offered in the room of the guilty. The needed sacrifice has been made. Christ became man, that he might shed his blood to make atonement for the sins of men; and, since he is at the same time God, his blood thus shed possesses an infinite value, an infinite efficacy to take away sin. Count the drops of water in the ocean: measure the distance of the remotest star which the telescope can descry:—but it will be vain to attempt to estimate the preciousness of the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son. You, moreover,—you, in common with all other unconverted sinners throughout the world—are invited and commanded to avail yourselves of the method of reconciliation to your offended Maker, which has been provided in the death of Christ. The proclamation is, "LET HIM THAT IS ATHIRST, COME! AND WHOSOEVER WILL, LET HIM TAKE OF THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY!" Well, then, do you desire salvation? Do you wish to be at peace with God, to have your sins pardoned, to obtain grace to sanctify your souls, and to have a good hope for eternity? All this is within your reach: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ! Surely this is not a hard condition. Surely it must be infatuation that leads any of you to continue in unbelief. If God has not spared his own Son, but has given him up to the humiliation of the manger and the agony of the cross, that a way of life might be opened up to you,—if Christ has come into the world, and actually made atonement for sin, according to the will of his Father,—and if the overtures of reconciliation, founded upon what has thus been done, are sent to you by God, and pressed upon you, O, surely, you will not reject the grace of God, and refuse to be reconciled to him!

3. In the third place, *we have seen that Christ, by his*

assumption of our nature, was enabled to leave us a perfect example of holiness : let those of us who profess to be his disciples, strive to follow his steps. He fulfilled all righteousness. His life was a transcript of the law of God into practice. We must endeavour to be like him. "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." That is a beautiful description which, in a well-known allegorical work, a dying saint is represented as giving of himself—"I have loved to hear my Lord spoken of; and, *wherever I have seen the print of his shoe in the earth, there I have coveted to set my foot too.*"* Ah! how little coveting is there, even among the best of us, to set our feet where we perceive the print of Christ's shoe in the earth! Let it be one of the results of this Sabbath's exercise, that we shall be more earnest and careful in the imitation of Christ than we have hitherto been. How salutary would be the effect, did we habitually consider, when indulging particular dispositions, and pursuing particular courses of conduct, whether the dispositions we indulge are kindred to those which reigned in Emmanuel, and whether the courses we pursue are such as he (could we fancy him placed in our position in life) would have adopted!

4. Finally, *how sweet to believers is the thought that, in consequence of the Sanctifier and the sanctified being all of one, they enjoy the Redeemer's sympathy!* To be assured that, amidst afflictions of whatever description, the Saviour in whom we trust, and by whom it is that the events of providence are determined, is able to enter into our feelings in the most intimate way, as having been himself afflicted, is certainly very valuable.

But, I would add, in order to enjoy the sympathy of Jesus, a believer must be animated with love to him, and must be living in active fellowship with him. In sym-

* Standfast, in the "Pilgrim's Progress."

pathy—at least in sympathy which has any effect upon the sufferer—there is something mutual. It is not a communication all on one side. One party sympathises with another, whose hand in some season of grief he presses with a kindly grasp. But the party receiving the sympathy is not passive. It does not drop into his soul, like oil into a lamp. He reciprocates the affection of his friend, welcomes its expression, and returns with answering cordiality the pressure of the hand that is given. O, then, my fellow-Christians, as we wish, when called to endure tribulation, to be sustained and cheered by the consciousness of our Redeemer's sympathy, let us seek to have the grace of love to him ever in lively exercise, and to be habituating ourselves to that communion with him which he invites his people to enjoy.

X.

THE FOUNDATION OF GOD STANDING SURE; OR, THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.

"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."—2 Tim. ii. 19.

In the verses immediately preceding our text, the apostle refers to two persons, Hymeneus and Philetus, who, it appears, were at one time professing Christians, but had fallen into error altogether subversive of Christianity, and had not only apostatised from the faith themselves, but had been the means of leading others to do so likewise. Ver. 17, "And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymeneus and Philetus: who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some." It is out of this reference (as is proved by the term "nevertheless," with which the text opens) that the statement before us flows.

Having mentioned the case of Hymeneus and Philetus, Paul naturally anticipates an unhappy inference, which some might be disposed to draw from it. Apostasy! Can such a thing be? Can those who have really been apprehended by Christ, and made members of his kingdom, be sepa-

rated from him and be lost? Is it possible for an individual to obtain a footing on the Rock of Ages, and to stand there in safety for a period, but to be swept away by waves of temptation, and perish at last? Hymeneus and Philetus: miserable examples! Were they believers, and have they ceased to be so? Were they once sheep in the flock of the good Shepherd, and do we see them now withdrawn from his care? Were they once planets, revolving in their places around the Sun of Righteousness, in harmonious association with other members of the Christian system, receiving the warmth, and joyfully reflecting the light, of the central luminary; and is the bond of attraction which bound them to Christ now broken? Have they been dissevered from the system, and become wandering stars, to which is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever? Then who is safe? May I, too, lapse into apostasy? Though the Spirit be now witnessing with my spirit that I am a child of God, may I hereafter lose every character of a child of God; and, instead of attaining to that crown of glory which I expect, be a castaway?

Feelings of this kind, which ill-informed Christians might possibly entertain, are met by the statement of our text. The apostle denies that such an inference from the case of Hymeneus and Philetus, as has been mentioned, was just, and on this implied ground, that they were not believers. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." They were professors of Christianity, but that was all. They called Christ, Lord, Lord, but their connection with him was only nominal. They were reckoned Christians, perhaps, by their fellow-men, who necessarily judge from outward appearances; but God, who looks upon the heart, knew the case to be otherwise. Mere professors of Christianity,

even those whose profession is loudest and most clamorous of notice, may apostatise, their zeal being of the earth, earthy: real Christians cannot, their religion being kindled from above, just as a bonfire quickly blazes out, while the lamps of heaven shine on with a steady and enduring light. There will be, in every age, parties who, after maintaining a connection with the church for a longer or shorter time, and of a more or less plausible kind, will prove themselves to have been insincere, by casting off the appearance of godliness; but the church itself, in its genuine members, will remain entire. "Nevertheless," notwithstanding of any cases of apostasy among professing Christians, "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

While there is no room for doubt as to the truth which the apostle means to announce in the text—that truth being the perseverance of the saints—a difference of opinion may exist as to the form of his conception; I mean, as to the precise outward image which he has in his mind when he speaks of a foundation and its seal. The essential truth of the text apart, what is the picture under which that truth is conceived? Are we to fancy to ourselves the foundation-stone of a building, with an engraving upon it? I apprehend not. The question is not indeed of vital consequence, where the essential truth of the text is not mistaken; still it is as well to have our ideas, even on such a matter, definite and correct. I regard the expression, *the foundation of God*, as equivalent to the building of God. It is an instance of that figure of speech where a part is used for the whole. The church is often represented as a building rising upon Christ as its basis;* he

* In the passage before us, the true church, the church invisible, consisting of real Christians, is so represented. See also 1 Peter ii. 4–8.

being the stone, elect, precious, which was laid in Zion, "in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord;" and when "the foundation" is spoken of here, I interpret it as put for the entire structure. The foundation of God means the edifice of the church, into which each believer is built as a living stone,—an edifice which comprehends the body of believers universally, and none else. With reference again to the *seal* which the text mentions, it must not be conceived as affixed to the foundation-stone of the building, but to the building itself. It was a custom with the ancients, as in fact it is with ourselves, to engrave upon the front, or other conspicuous part, of important buildings, aphorisms suited to their peculiar character. Keeping this practice in view, I conclude that the apostle wishes, in the verse before us, to depict an edifice—the edifice of the church—with two significant sentences inscribed above its portals, either together, or, if you please, on its opposite faces:—THE LORD KNOWETH THEM THAT ARE HIS; and, LET EVERY ONE THAT NAMETH THE NAME OF CHRIST DEPART FROM INIQUITY,—sentences which, while they mark the fact that every stone in the edifice on which they are engraved, every member of the church, is secured against falling away, are at the same time beautifully suggestive of the ground and manner of the fact; the former exhibiting the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints on what may be called its celestial, and the latter on what may be termed its terrestrial side; the one connecting perseverance with the special concern which Christ has in his people; the other with the sincere and strenuous endeavours of saints themselves to continue in the paths of holy obedience.

But sometimes the same figure is employed to represent the visible church, consisting of professing Christians. See the Sermon in this volume on 1 Cor. iii. 12–15, entitled, "Gold, silver, precious stones—wood, hay, stubble."

With these prefatory remarks, which I have made for the purpose of fully clearing the text, I proceed, in dependence on divine grace, to consider a little the subject of the perseverance of the saints, according to the twofold scheme that has been mentioned, viz., *first, on its celestial side,* as connected with the special concern which Christ has in his people; and *next, on its terrestrial side,* as connected with the endeavours of saints themselves to continue in the path of obedience.

I. I begin by considering THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS AS CONNECTED WITH THE SPECIAL INTEREST WHICH CHRIST HAS IN HIS PEOPLE. "The Lord knoweth them that are his." 1. And my first observation is, *that Christ knows true saints as chosen from eternity to everlasting life by his Father.*

In the Epistle to the Ephesians, after the opening salutation, the apostle Paul thus addresses the converts to whom he was writing:—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself." Here the saving benefits which had been conferred upon the Ephesians, are traced up to the eternal election of God as their source. God had blessed the converted members of that church with all spiritual blessings in Christ—"according as he had chosen them in Christ before the foundation of the world." They were walking before God in a spirit of love, as his children, in some good measure at least, holy and blameless. But why had this come to pass? Because God had "predestinated them unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself."

Consider another passage in the 8th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called* according to his purpose." Is an individual called—effectually called—brought to a real reception of the Gospel, to such a reception of it as fills him with love to God? This takes place in accomplishment of a previous divine purpose. In the words that follow the apostle dwells upon this thought. "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified them he also glorified." What can be more explicit than such language, where God's eternal election is represented as the bud, out of which, one after another, all the blossoms of salvation, issuing finally in the ripe fruit of eternal glory, unfold themselves?

It is a general truth, applicable not merely to spiritual things, but to all others likewise, that whatever God does in time, he purposed to do from eternity. He creates a world. He clothes it with brilliance. He makes it a star. He sets it in the firmament, an illustrious monument of his wisdom and power. He does not do this in execution of a thought that originated yesterday. From everlasting it was his intention to create that world, and to

* Called, *i. e.*, effectually called. In the writings of Paul, persons are never said to be called merely in consequence of the Gospel call (as it is termed) being outwardly addressed to them. But this expression denotes either the divine designation of an individual to some sacred office—the office of an apostle, for example, or his being brought by the influence of the Holy Spirit to a saving knowledge of the truth. The term "effectual," used by the authors of our Shorter Catechism to describe this latter species of calling, is very appropriate. A shot is effectually fired when it strikes the mark. Influence is effectually exerted when it gains its object. The call of the Spirit is effectual, because it never fails to produce conversion.

invest it with its starry splendour, and to place it in the orbit where it moves and shines. In like manner he converts a sinner; creates anew a soul dead in trespasses and sins; adorns it with the beauties of holiness; makes it a glorious trophy of his grace—one in which all pure intelligences love to contemplate the display of his adorable perfections. He does this too, not without a previous purpose, but in fulfilment of a design he entertained before the commencement of time.

Now, mark the bearing of this doctrine upon the perseverance of the saints. A timid believer trembles when he sees cases of apostasy. What if I, too, fall away? What if my faith be overthrown, like that of Hymeneus and Philetus? Nay, fear not. "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" If you are a genuine believer, God's eternal election secures you against such a thing. Christ Jesus the Lord "knoweth them that are his." He knows whom the Father "hath from the beginning chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth;" and he says concerning them, "This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." Whom God designed to save from eternity, he will save. If their faith could fail,—if Satan could make them his prey,—if their souls could be lost,—then either God would not be omnipotent on the one hand, or he would not be unchangeable on the other.

2. I would observe, secondly, that *Christ knows true saints, as those for whom he once died, and ever lives to intercede.*

All that Christ did here below was for his people. "For their sakes," he said, "I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth."—(John xvii. 19.) To sanctify is to set apart from a common to a sacred purpose. For his people's sakes, Christ sanctified himself, set

himself apart to humiliation and sufferings, that they might be sanctified through the truth, or separated from the general mass of mankind, and made a peculiar people, kings and priests to God. For their sakes, he assumed human nature; and lay as an infant in the stable at Bethlehem; and was "despised and rejected of men," growing up "as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground." For their sakes, he endured the repeated bitter assaults of Satan, and was subjected to the awful outpourings of his Father's displeasure. For their sakes he suffered the anguish of the garden, and stood before Pontius Pilate, and wore the purple robe and the crown of thorns. For their sakes he was nailed to the cross, and "poured out his soul unto death." "Christ . . . loved THE CHURCH, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish."

There are some, indeed, who deny that the Redeemer's death was connected with a purpose securing its saving application to his people, or to any of our fallen race in particular. They affirm that his death secured nothing, but only rendered salvation possible to the members of the human family in general. This is just saying that Christ died upon an uncertainty,—that he threw away his life upon a venture; an opinion, the statement of which is, to my mind, its refutation. Christ's death secured the salvation of none: it only made salvation possible to mankind sinners! In other words, the Son of God left the bosom of the Father, and came down to this world of grief and sin, and bled and died upon the accursed tree; it being all the while undetermined whether any—or, if any, who—should obtain redemption through his blood! Why, in that case, he might have died, and never a sinner have profited by

his death! The good Shepherd might have laid down his life, and not one wandering sheep have been brought back, in consequence, to the fold! Is this conceivable? No. The thought is pregnant with dishonour to the blood of Christ, and cannot with reverence be entertained. I am unable to comprehend how a person can place himself in calm and solemn reflection before the cross, and behold One, whom he knows to be the Son of the Highest, not only bearing the outward torture and shame of crucifixion, but also agonised under the hidings of his Father's countenance, and hear him, in the darkness of that mysterious hour, crying with a loud voice, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—and yet hold to a scheme of doctrine, leading to the consequence, that no saving benefit might have resulted from this to a single soul, after all.

With Christ's atoning death, we must connect his intercession; his death and intercession being not so much two distinct works, as different parts of the same work. Having died for his people on earth, he intercedes for them in heaven. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them,"—ever lives to plead the efficacy of his atoning death on their behalf. Not that it is necessary to imagine the Saviour formally employing the language and gestures of a suppliant. When we read of him entering into heaven with his own blood, and appearing in the presence of God for us, it were a gross and unworthy conception to think that he, in a literal sense, holds up the memorials of his death to the view of his Father. This is merely a mode of representation, suited to the weakness of our faculties; and the essential ideas which it clothes are, that Jesus, having died to make atonement for the sins of his people, may now, as a matter of right, claim the fulfilment of that part of the everlasting covenant, in which the salvation of those for whom

he died was guaranteed,—and that, as certainly as he himself lives, so certainly he will see to it, that those whose representative he was, shall be brought to the enjoyment of eternal life also.

With an intelligent apprehension of the work of Christ, as thus stated, a persuasion of the perseverance of the saints must necessarily associate itself. If you are united by faith to Jesus, how is it possible that you can at any future time be separated from him? Would not the suspicion of this be equivalent to saying, that the price which he paid for them, the price of his own blood, so much more precious than corruptible things like silver and gold, may be counted worthless? and that the intercession which he is unceasingly making for them, an intercession founded on his vicarious sacrifice, may be rejected? "The Lord knoweth them that are his." A Hymeneus and a Philetus who never were believers,—for whom he did not die,—for whom he does not intercede,—they, after making a profession of faith, may apostatise, and visibly go down to death. But you,—you who are true believers,—you for whom he shed his blood upon earth, and for whom he acts as Intercessor within the veil,—you cannot fall away. The Redeemer "shall see of the travail of his soul" in your salvation, "and shall be satisfied."

3. I would remark once more that *Christ knows true saints, as subjects of the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit.*

Those whom the Father chose in Christ before the foundation of the world, and for whom Christ, in obedience to the will of his Father, voluntarily gave himself, have the redemption of Christ in due time applied to them by the Spirit. That divine agent, convincing them of their sin and misery, enlightening them in the knowledge of Jesus, and removing their natural aversion to the gospel, leads them to believe in Christ, as freely offered to their accept-

ance. It is then that an actual union between them and Christ is formed. Upon their faith, they are engrafted into the true Vine, the source of spiritual life; or (to use the figure of the text) they are added, as living stones, to the edifice of the Church; that edifice which has Christ for its chief corner-stone. From that period, a progressive process of sanctification goes on in their souls. The Spirit, dwelling in them, purifies them more and more each day; weakens remaining corruption; renders their conformity to God more decided; and enables them, in an increasing manner, to bring forth the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory of God.

Now, what an impregnable argument for the perseverance of the saints do we find here again? The experience you have had, my believing friends, of saving grace, is a pledge that it shall not be taken from you; for, if you deny this, you virtually accuse God of inconstancy in his operations. He plucks an individual to-day like a brand out of the burning, and allows him to drop into his former condition to-morrow. He plants the seed of the divine life in a heart, watches over it for several years, keeping it every moment lest any hurt it, waters it with the dews of heaven, so that it grows up, and flourishes, and bears fruit; and then deserts it, and permits its root to wither. He renews a soul after his own image in righteousness and true holiness, and brings the features to a certain measure of distinctness; but abandons the work unfinished, and every line that he has drawn is entirely obliterated. He does much, and then lets all be undone. Is this the procedure of Him who has said, "I am the Lord, I change not"? Impossible! "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." There is no drawing back on his part, no recalling of what he bestows. Where he begins a good work by his Spirit, he will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Just fancy to yourselves a sinner, sunk in

the abyss of guilt and depravity, wretched and helpless. Fancy divine grace descending, stretching out its compassionate hand, laying hold upon him, drawing him out of the fearful abyss, and carrying him upwards towards glory. See him washed, and sanctified, and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God; made a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust; full of peace, his soul rejoicing in hope,—a peace and hope such as Scripture warrant. Hear the songs which angels sing over him as a true penitent. And then fancy the grace which has done all this for him letting him go, and suffering him to become again a child of hell and an heir of condemnation. No! no! it cannot be. The Spirit is imparted as "the earnest of our inheritance;" and what is an earnest, but part possession now, in assurance of full possession hereafter? Where the first instalment of the heavenly inheritance has been received,—and *this* every one of God's people has, in the measure of sanctification to which the Holy Spirit has brought him,—full possession may certainly in due time be expected. The salvation of a sinner is not a work to be abandoned, where it has once been commenced. Let the light of every star that gleams in the material firmament be quenched, yet never shall the ray of divine life kindled within a human soul be suffered to expire! Never, never, shall that soul descend into its pristine darkness; but, notwithstanding all that Satan may do to extinguish it, its lustre shall wax brighter and brighter until it blaze forth in all the glory of complete redemption!

Gathering together the different particulars which have been stated, we have found that the perseverance of the saints, viewed on its celestial side, as connected with the knowledge which the Lord has of them that are his, may be established on these grounds,—first, that God the

Father chose them to everlasting life from all eternity; secondly, that Christ once died, and ever lives to intercede for them; and thirdly, that the Holy Spirit has begun a work of sanctification in them. These premises abundantly warrant the conclusion (and they are the only premises from which such a conclusion can be deduced), that where a stone is added to the edifice of the true Church, built into and vitally connected with Christ, the gates of hell shall not prevail to remove it.

II. Let us now, however, as proposed secondly, look at the doctrine of PERSEVERANCE on its terrestrial side, as CONNECTED WITH THE ENDEAVOURS OF SAINTS THEMSELVES TO CONTINUE IN THE PATHS OF HOLY OBEDIENCE. "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

A common objection against the doctrine of perseverance is, that it destroys all motive to watchfulness and exertion. A Christian who believes in the perseverance of the saints will, it is alleged, be apt to say, I need not be very anxious to guard against sin, for the grace of God renders it certain that sin shall not obtain a final dominion over me. I need not be very anxious to make progress in holiness, because the grace of God absolutely secures my being perfectly sanctified in due time. Were this objection valid, the inscription upon the foundation of God, "The Lord knoweth them that are his," ought to be associated, not with that which our text presents in connection with it, but with the totally opposite motto, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ be indifferent about departing from iniquity."

But the objection can be proved to be without the shadow of force. For,

1. *Should an individual conclude from the doctrine of perseverance that watchfulness and exertion on his part*

may be dispensed with, he argues on an assumption which he is not entitled to make, namely, that he is in a state of grace. We lay down the axiom, that no one is at liberty to consider himself in a state of grace, who is living in the habit, or indulging the thought, of known sin. A child of God may, indeed, at times do what conscience tells him is wrong; but while thus acting, or purposing thus to act, he cannot be warranted to conclude that he is a child of God. "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." Bring the light of this simple principle to bear upon the objection we are examining, and its invalidity will be at once apparent. The objection is, that on our doctrine an individual may argue thus:—"I am a believer in Christ, and being so, I need not strive against sin, or be earnest in the cultivation of holiness, because the grace of God secures the preservation of all true believers." Yes; but are you a believer? Where is the evidence? Does it lie in the fact that you are entertaining the idea of ceasing your vigilance against sin, and of relaxing your efforts after the attainment of holiness? Does it lie in the attachment to sin, and the disrelish for holy duty, which the entertainment of such an idea implies? Ah! take heed. Be not deceived. It is true that *saints* "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation;" but ere you draw any inference from this, with regard to yourself, let it be ascertained that you are a saint. How can you be assured of this, while you are on terms with iniquity, and are revolving in your mind the expediency or safety of slackening your warfare against it? You may be a believer. The root of the matter may be in you. And if so, though you should, under present temptation, become remiss for a time, and even fall into gross acts of wickedness, you shall not be left finally to perish. He who restored David

and Peter, will restore you too. But we deny that this is a doctrine from which you can fairly derive any encouragement to remissness, or to acts of wickedness; for, while you are committing such acts, or even parleying with the lusts that incite to their commission, you cannot know that the grace of faith is, or ever was, in your souls. The evidence of your faith is, meanwhile, totally eclipsed; and, therefore, nothing which Scripture teaches regarding the perseverance of believers can, by just application, be used by you as the basis of any conclusion regarding yourself.

2. While it is thus impossible for any one legitimately to employ the doctrine of perseverance, so as to encourage himself in remissness, seeing that in the very thought of becoming remiss, he ceases to know that he is one of those whose perseverance is guaranteed, we would observe still further, that *the objection we are considering proceeds upon the false idea that the fear of perdition is the mainspring of a believer's holiness.* The objection is,—if saints were absolutely assured that they should never perish, they would be apt (all apprehension of the consequences of sin being removed) to give unbridled license to their evil inclinations. But is the dread of future punishment the only motive which makes the people of God anxious to depart from iniquity? If this check were withdrawn, would all their zeal in serving their Maker, and their warm and active benevolence to their fellow-men, be at an end? What! Would gratitude to Jehovah, as the God of their redemption, have no influence upon them? Would the constraining influence of the love of Christ not still be felt? Would the perceptions which the Holy Spirit has imparted to their renewed minds of the essential deformity and odiousness of sin on the one hand, and of the beauty of holiness on the other, not continue to repel them from the former, and to attract them to the latter? Would there remain no force in that appeal of the inspired apostle,

"How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" O! it is not fear, but love, that is the mainspring of a believer's vigilance and activity! It would be a poor, poor holiness which depended for its continuance upon terror. Such is not the holiness of a believer. It is from Calvary, and not from hell,—it is from the enlightened exhibition of the divine grace and perfections, afforded in the cross of God's dear Son, that the believer's pure desires are quickened, his pious purposes strengthened, his God-glorifying efforts invigorated. To the assertion, therefore, that if he were raised above the fear of possible perdition, all motive for diligence would be destroyed,—to this assertion, as involving an entire misconception of the source from which holiness springs, we give a direct denial.

3. But is not fear (some may ask) at least a very considerable motive to holiness? And would not a believer's watchfulness and activity be augmented if this were added to the other motives under whose influence he lives? Would he not be apt to be more circumspect if he felt that he might become a castaway? We answer that *the influence of fear, as far as it is really of benefit, is felt where the doctrine of perseverance is held, as much as where it is denied.* But as there is room for mistake here, and as the point is of considerable importance for the general elucidation of the subject, we shall be somewhat particular in endeavouring to clear it up.

The operation of fear is not compatible with the full and perfect influence of those better principles by which a Christian ought to be swayed. A Christian ought to believe the gospel of God's grace with absolute confidence; if he did so, fear could have no place in his mind. A Christian ought to love God with his whole soul; if he did so, he could have no servile dread of God, for "there is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect

in love." Again, fear is not, in any degree, the proximate motive of a Christian's obedience. So far as a Christian's conduct is immediately determined by this motive, it has nothing good or acceptable to God about it. Conduct that is good and acceptable to God must proceed from love. Fear may doubtless mingle with a Christian's love, but when it does, far from co-operating with his love, as a motive to obedience, it only hinders his love, and stunts the fruits of obedience which his love produces. What, then, are we to think of the opinion, that a measure of fear, co-operating with the other motives under which a believer lives, would be beneficial? Plainly, that no such co-operation is possible. Fear can co-operate with love in quickening holy effort, just as mists co-operate with the sun in illuminating a landscape. We do not deny that fear is useful in its own place. We could not deny this, without contradicting innumerable passages of Scripture, in which the dread of final perdition is held forth as a motive that should possess weight with believers. Fear, therefore, has its place in the scheme of Christian motives; but what is that place? A Christian, under the force of temptation, begins to waver. He allows the cross, in the sanctifying power of the truths that cluster around it, to fade from his mind. He is dallying with iniquity. It is now that the threatenings of the Word of God, appealing to the principle of fear, come into play. They had no bearing upon the individual previously. They had no applicability to him, nor were designed to affect his conduct while he had the cross before his view, and was sincerely striving to do the will of God. But now it is different. Now, when he is turning to sinful indulgence, the awful intimations of Scripture, regarding the doom of sinners, come in to render him miserable. His fears are awakened. He trembles, and justly, at the peril to which he is exposing his soul. "Justly? Can he then, having been really in Christ, fall

away?" By no means. But he has lost the evidence that he is, or ever was, in Christ. He cannot, in the state of sin into which he has been betrayed, assure himself before God. Let his past experiences be what they may, they go for nothing in the face of present iniquity. Therefore, we say, he justly trembles for his soul, not because the sheep of Christ can be taken out of the Redeemer's hand, but because he has let go the handle of the assurance he once may have had, that he is of the number of Christ's sheep. This, we maintain, is the only legitimate way in which fear can operate as a motive with believers; and, be it observed, it is not, like love, a proximate motive to holy obedience, but it only acts remotely, coming into play upon those occasions when a Christian has lost sight of the immediate and proper motives by which he should be guided, and proving of service by leading him to place himself once more under the influence of the sanctifying principles from which his soul had temporarily been withdrawn.

If this be understood, is it not obvious that the influence of fear, as far it is really of benefit, is experienced where the doctrine of perseverance is held, as much as it can be on any other system? For, the moment that a believer begins to give wilful entertainment to sin (and it is in such a case alone that fear is beneficial), he loses his assurance. If, when made distinctly conscious of the sinfulness of a particular course, he persists in it, he is necessitated to doubt whether he is, or ever was, a believer. The doctrine that the foundation of God standeth sure, can here yield him no confidence, for *is he in that foundation?* Was he ever in it? He cannot know this while his iniquity is not put away. The proper inference, while his iniquity is not put away, is the unfavourable one. In these circumstances, when Scripture thunders forth in his hearing the doom awaiting the workers of iniquity, he

feels, and properly feels, as if every awful sentence were fulminated against himself.

These remarks may suffice to show how absolutely devoid of force is the charge which has been brought against the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, that it tends to encourage licentiousness. We trust that we have made it plain that there is no ground for such an allegation, and that the apostle's recognition of what is celestial in a believer's perseverance,—"The Lord knoweth them that are his,"—is not in the least at variance with the exhortation subjoined, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." The truth is, instead of being mutually opposed, the two mottos of our text are supplementary of one another. Neither would of itself furnish a complete view of the case; because, in every instance of perseverance, the end is gained by the grace of God and the rational energies of man harmoniously co-operating. Perseverance is consequent upon divine grace: it is no less consequent upon human endeavour. Are these statements inconsistent? No; for the effect of the grace of God is just to maintain believers in that spirit of holy endeavour to which their perseverance is immediately referable. God keeps his people, not in such a manner as to render earnestness and circumspection on their part needless, but, on the very contrary, by making them earnest and circumspect. The sphere of divine influence is the soul of the individual whose permanent connection with the foundation of God is secured; and that connection is secured by his being himself led, in the exercise of his freedom as an intelligent being, to continue trusting in the Saviour and walking in his commandments.

Therefore, "let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity." Every kind of iniquity should be guarded against by professing Christians. It is not enough, my believing friends, that you avoid those

gross forms of vice which even worldly men unite in reprobating; allow yourselves in nothing that is sinful, however slight the degree of turpitude connected with the practice may seem to be, or may be commonly accounted. "Whosoever," writes the apostle James, "shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all;" and the principle of this decision is plain, because where a man is influenced by a sense of the authority of the Most High, without which there can be no obedience in a proper sense to any of God's commandments, that will lead him to aim at observing equally every precept which God has given. Though a certain course of conduct should be ever so agreeable to your natural inclinations, or should promise to be ever so profitable in a worldly point of view, yet, if it be sinful, do not go into it. Let that weighty consideration determine you: "How shall I do this wickedness and sin against God?" Take the Scriptures for your rule of duty; search them diligently to ascertain what they require on the one hand, and forbid on the other, and never be induced to swerve from the path which they prescribe. Guard against sin in the heart, as well as in the outward conduct. Many secretly indulge impure, covetous, malignant, vain, envious dispositions, while prudential reasons nevertheless restrain them from allowing such feelings to become manifest. It must not be so with you. Christ requires heart-holiness from his disciples. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom." In fact, there is, strictly speaking, no holiness at all except what has its seat in the heart. External conduct is counted virtuous or vicious, only because it is the expression and index of the disposition of the soul. Strive, then, to have sin mortified within you. The whole matter is summed up, in the Second Epistle to the

Corinthians, in these words: "Dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." We shall never, it is true, be able, with all our endeavours, to keep ourselves entirely free from iniquity. Corruption, in a greater or less degree, clings to the best of God's people to the end of their lives. Paul, even while "delighting in the law of God after the inward man," had to mourn over "the law in his members, that warred against the law of his mind;" and John wrote regarding himself, in common with other Christians, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." To be "without fault," is reserved for those who are "before the throne." But let us not willingly be subject to iniquity. If, through the weakness of the flesh and the force of temptation, sin does, from time to time, obtain an advantage over us, let us at least not consent to its yoke, nor lie unresistingly under it. Let us be ever fighting against our lusts with a holy determination, though we should not succeed in getting the better of them completely. If not perfectly holy in fact, let us be perfectly holy in our habitual reigning desires and intentions. And since God alone "is able to keep us from falling," let us strive against iniquity in a spirit of humble dependence upon divine grace. Let us "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling,"—with a constant faith in the presence and aid of "God, which worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Of ourselves we are utterly insufficient to contend against our spiritual enemies—the devil, the world, and the flesh; but we take courage, and feel assured of victory, when we remember who has said, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." There is a beautiful relation—a relation not merely of consistency, but of mutually-realised completeness in the two scriptural declarations—"Without

me ye can do nothing," and "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

In every point of view in which a profession of Christianity can be regarded, the obligation to depart from iniquity, under which it places those by whom it is made, is abundantly evident. *By naming the name of Christ, we virtually own subjection to him as our Master.* If, then, we live in sin, and trample the Redeemer's most solemn injunctions under foot, are we not giving the direct lie to our profession? "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord," is Christ's own expostulation with such disciples, "and do not the things which I say?" *In naming the name of Christ, we bind ourselves to imitate his example:* for he has said, "Learn of me;" and "if any man serve me, let him follow me." Shall we then live in sin, when he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners?" No. We cannot but be sensible of the force of the apostle John's statement, "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." *By naming the name of Christ, we declare our belief of the great truths of Christianity.* Can these be believed, without purifying the heart, and creating a sincere disposition to depart from iniquity? "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." "Christ Jesus came into the world, to save sinners." Can a person be indeed receiving these as "faithful sayings and worthy of all acceptation,"—can he apprehend their meaning, and really credit them,—can he be presenting to himself those aspects of the divine character which they bring before the mind,—without feeling sin to be an exceedingly evil and bitter thing, and earnestly desiring to be freed from its pollution? *By naming the name of Christ, we profess to be looking to him for the redemption which is through his blood.* And what is that? A redemption,—not from wrath merely,—but likewise, and

principally, from sin. He "gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world." He "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." To say that any one is, in fact, looking to Christ for such a salvation, and yet is not anxious to be emancipated from sinful lusts,—to say that any one is looking to Christ for such a salvation, and is at the same time in a state of mind which will allow him to continue in iniquity,—is a contradiction in terms. *If, in a word, we are intelligently and honestly naming the name of Christ, can we but be loving him?* He bought us with his own blood. He loved us, and gave himself for us. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." To the atonement which he made for our sins, we are indebted for all the blessings which we either enjoy now, or expect to receive hereafter. Surely we cannot but love such a Saviour; and love him we cannot, without having a rooted detestation of iniquity,—the cause of all his sufferings,—the abominable thing which he hates,—and that which alone at any time clouds or interrupts our communion with him.

Upon a review of all that has been said, the frame of spirit which a Christian ought to cherish will be manifest. If sincerely conscious of having received Christ as our Saviour, and given ourselves up to him as our Lord and Master, we ought to rest upon his atonement without dismay or doubting. We should not admit the thought, that we can be plucked out of Christ's hand, and perish. "The Lord knoweth them that are his," and he will keep us safe. Maintaining this confidence, we should render a constant filial obedience to God's commandments. We should serve him "without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." The holiness which he re-

quires should be cultivated by us, not out of servile dread (which never can produce real obedience), but from the higher motives, which have their origin in the cross of God's dear Son, and which exercise their full and legitimate influence, only where every thing of the nature of terror and slavish apprehension is banished from the soul. It is a mistake which, we trust, has been sufficiently exposed in the previous part of the discourse, that fear is, in any degree, a sentiment which it is right or salutary for a believer to cherish. In particular, we trust we have exposed the erroneous notion that such a sentiment is friendly to holiness. When a believer has temporarily turned away his eyes from the cross,—when he has been betrayed into sin, and is beginning to yield himself in voluntary subjection to it,—then (as we showed) fear has its appropriate part to play in the scheme of Christian motives; its function being to drive him back to Christ. But when, to use an excellent expression, common with old theological writers, he is *acting faith* on a crucified Saviour, shall we say that it would be any advantage for him to have some degree of fear mingled with the confidence which the humble view of Christ inspires? Would a little fear, tempering his confidence, be a safeguard against presumption? Far, very far, from it. With singular beauty it has been said, "*the fixed stars do tremble most.*" The man who will stand most in awe of God, who will shrink most from the idea of offending God, who will be most watchfully solicitous to neglect nothing that God has commanded, is not he who sees the pit of destruction opening its mouth to swallow him up; but he who, in the grasp of the Saviour, and clinging to the Saviour, feels himself secure,—with no cause for alarm,—but with greater cause than tongue can tell or heart conceive for gratitude to the Father of mercies.

XI.

THE INTERCESSION OF THE SPIRIT.

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."—ROM. viii. 26, 27.

BEFORE stating the points which it is my main design to illustrate in this discourse, I would crave your attention to some remarks explanatory of the meaning of the text, which will prepare the way for what is to follow.

First, with regard to the purpose for which the statement of the text is introduced, I would observe that the apostle is, in this part of the chapter, speaking of the afflictions by which Christians are often so severely tried, —that he is suggesting a variety of considerations for their comfort under trial,—and that the aid which they receive from the Holy Spirit is mentioned as one among other things full of rich consolation. "Likewise" (that is, besides what has been previously named) "the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities,"—assists us amidst our distresses. *Again*, if it be asked what particular kind of help the apostle alludes to, we answer that the reference is to the aid which believers receive in prayer,—an aid of which

they stand greatly in need, "for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us." Here let it be noted, that when the Holy Spirit is described as making intercession *for* saints, the idea is, not that he himself immediately intercedes with God the Father in their behalf, but that he assists and directs them in the supplications which they offer. The original might have been more literally rendered *in us*, in our hearts. To plead with the Father as the advocate of believers is the exclusive office of our Great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ; the office of the Spirit is to aid believers in pleading for themselves. A *third* remark which I would make has reference to the closing expression of the 26th verse, "With groanings which cannot be uttered." This does not signify that the Spirit makes intercession by producing within the soul "groanings which cannot be uttered;" but that his assistance is afforded to believers, and proves sweetly consoling to them when they are overwhelmed with the severity of their afflictions, reduced to utter perplexity, and filled with sorrows too big for utterance. The picture which the apostle's language calls up before the mind is an exquisitely fine one. He shows us a child of God in the extremity of trouble. His soul is "cast down and disquieted within him." He is in such a condition as the Psalmist describes when he says, "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." Friends, perhaps, surround him, and endeavour to minister comfort to him; but to their expressions of sympathy he answers nothing, except by the sighs that issue from his heart. He does not speak his griefs, for they cannot be spoken. But lo! the Spirit, the Comforter, comes, and teaches him to turn his eyes to Heaven for relief. He remembers who has said, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will answer thee." He is enabled, though, perhaps, in no for-

mally arranged and articulately uttered terms, but only groaning forth his desires, to cast his care upon the Lord; and, as the result, a placid and composed submissiveness, or even a feeling of triumph under his weight of tribulation, is produced. *Once more*, when it is said in verse 27, "He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints, according to the will of God," the meaning is, that the omniscient Jehovah, God the Father, is acquainted with the desires which the Holy Spirit excites within the minds of his people, that he regards these with complacency, and that, produced as they are in entire accordance with his own purposes, they cannot fail, when offered up to him in prayer, to receive a gracious answer.

Such being the import of the two verses which form our text, I would now observe that the assistance which the Spirit is described as rendering to believers in tribulation, is just a particular instance of the doctrine, that effectual prayer is in every case the fruit of the Spirit's influence. The passage before us is the only one where this work of the Spirit receives the name of intercession; but there are other passages where it is expressly set forth, though in different language. For example, in the epistle to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul, speaking of the extension of the Gospel in these latter days, beyond the limits of Judea, to the various nations of the Gentile world, says, "Through him [Christ] we both have access by one Spirit to the Father." The Spirit leads Jews and Gentiles forward together to a mercy-seat; and it is by his influence that believers, whether belonging to the one class or the other, are enabled to present prayers which come up with acceptance before God. Again, we are directed to pray "always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit," and to "watch thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Here it is taken for granted that true

acceptable prayer is that which is offered in the Spirit. The apostle Jude likewise writes thus to believers, "But ye, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." These and other passages teach, that the agency of the Spirit in making intercession for the saints, which the text speaks of as exerted in seasons of affliction, and as then productive of great consolation, is not confined to such seasons, but extends to every instance in which real prayer is presented.

In the sequel of the discourse, I do not mean to restrict myself to the particular, but shall take the general view of the subject; and, in reliance on the promised grace of God, I shall *first* offer some hints illustrative of our need of the Spirit's assistance in prayer; *next*, say a few words for the purpose of setting the doctrine of his intercession in a proper light, and vindicating it from misconception and abuse; and *finally*, point out the propriety of the apostle's inference, from the fact of the Spirit's intercession, to the certainty that the prayers of believers shall be heard.

I. I am to begin, then, by *illustrating the necessity of the Spirit's help in prayer;* and, because the apostle had immediately in view the petitions offered by believers in a time of outward distress, I shall take my first illustration from these.

When saints are in affliction, their grand resource is a throne of grace. "Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." In going, however, to a throne of grace, and seeking to pour out our souls to God, how much do we need the help of the Spirit,

in order to our praying with a proper sense of our own ignorance of what is best, and with a disposition to acquiesce in whatever a wise and gracious Providence may ordain! How little can we judge of the designs which God may have in view towards ourselves or towards others, in particular trying dispensations, which press heavily upon us, and from which we are apt to be too eager to obtain deliverance! How great is our natural unwillingness to leave every thing in the hand of God! We would all, if we were to follow the dictates of flesh and blood, desire health and worldly prosperity, exemption from personal and relative distress, a smooth voyage through life, an untroubled sea, and a cloudless sky; and we are in danger of asking such things too absolutely, forgetting that a lot of the kind we wish might be the very one most fitted to be injurious to our ultimate interests. It is not wrong to pray for temporal blessings, if only we do it with faith in the kindness and in the superior wisdom of our Father in heaven, and with expressed or implied submission to his will, however contrary that may prove to our desires. But none thus pray except those whom the Holy Spirit aids. The influence of this divine agent must be put forth upon our minds ere we will fully recognise the truth, that afflictions may be needful for us, and will frame our petitions upon the recognition of it. It is his prompting alone which teaches an individual, while beseeching earnestly that some bitter cup may, if possible, pass from him, to add, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done."

Passing beyond the case immediately contemplated in the text, I would observe, that we need the Spirit's help, whatever be the special circumstances in which we approach a throne of grace, to inspire us with right conceptions of the God to whom our supplications are addressed. It is indispensable in prayer that we realise in some measure the presence of Jehovah, and have our minds solem-

nised under a consideration of his glorious perfections. But how difficult is it to do this! How difficult to feel, in any adequate degree, that we are drawing nigh to Him before whom the seraphim cover their faces—to the uncreated, self-existent, everlasting One who formed all things, and upholds all things; who is of purer eyes than to behold evil,—of whose throne justice and judgment are the habitation, and who will by no means clear the guilty! How difficult to realise the truth, when we kneel before God, that he is infinite in mercy, while spotlessly holy and inflexibly just; and that, through the channel of the mediation of his dear Son, he is holding himself forth as ready to be pacified towards the chief of sinners! God can be thus apprehended by us, in a lively and soul-affecting manner, only in so far as the eyes of our understandings have been enlightened, and the veil has been removed from our hearts, by the Holy Spirit.

If the Spirit's aid is necessary to give us right conceptions of the glory of God, it is no less requisite in order to our praying with a proper apprehension of our own sinfulness and guilt. What a sense of our unworthiness ought we to have when we kneel before a throne of grace! We are in the presence of the Holy One—we who are but sinful "dust and ashes." We are about to ask great things, though we are utterly undeserving of the least of God's mercies. How often have we thus knelt before God, and confessed sin, and promised to forsake it; and yet how great is its power over us still, and how do we continue day by day to be guilty of express and positive violations of the divine law! How grievously, in our habitual conduct, do we fail to fulfil the obligations under which we lie to love and serve God! How great is our ingratitude for all his mercies,—our forgetfulness of him,—our remaining worldly-mindedness, and setting up of our own inclinations above his will! We certainly have cause for broken and

contrite hearts in his presence. It is only those whose hearts are broken and contrite under a sense of sin, whose supplications God will not despise. But how can such a frame of mind be produced and maintained but by the influence of the Spirit? It is his office to convince of sin. Our natural tendency is to look upon sin as by no means so exceedingly evil and bitter a thing as Scripture makes it,—to be much less affected by the sins which we have committed than their number and heinousness render suitable,—to frame excuses for them,—to overlook many of them, and to underestimate others. We need the Spirit's assistance to reveal to us the plague of our own hearts,—to show us how vile we are,—to call our sins to our remembrance, and to bring us near to the hearer of prayer with feelings akin to those of the publican, who durst not so much as lift his eyes up to heaven, but smote upon his breast, and said, "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

I may remark, as a further illustration, that the Spirit's help is necessary to maintain within us that frame of mind which we ought constantly to be cherishing, with regard to the temptations to sin that surround us, and of the nearness of which we may at times be ourselves unconscious. We are commanded to "pray without ceasing." The necessity of unceasing prayer arises, among other things, from our being constantly exposed to temptation, and needing at every moment divine grace to keep us from falling. We cannot be always uttering the language of prayer; but we need to be always on our guard against sin, and exercising the habit, even amid the busy engagements of common life, of looking to God for aid, as often as temptation whispers its first suggestion to our minds. We need to be ever prayerfully on the watch, not only against temptations which are visible, but also against others which may be unseen. We cannot tell what snares

Satan may be laying for our feet. He may be arming against us the hatred of the world, or bringing its more perilous seductive influences to bear upon us. He may be preparing, in his subtlety, enticements exactly suited to our besetting propensities; while we, blind, and apprehending no danger, may be voluntarily going into the very scenes where we shall be most fiercely assailed. We ought never, therefore, even when our mountain seems to stand strongest, and when we fancy ourselves in least danger of being betrayed into sin, to relax our Christian vigilance, or to cease cherishing the spirit of the petition, "Hold up my goings, that my feet may not slide." But such a habit of prayerful watchfulness can exist only as a fruit of the abiding influence of the Holy Spirit.

These are examples of the incapacity of God's people to pray aright without divine assistance. And, to specify no further instances, I may just ask in general, whether believers, when left to themselves, are not conscious of a coldness and deadness of heart in prayer, rendering the exercise little better than a form? To use a common expression, at such times they have no *liberty* in their devotions. Not that to our praying aright there is ever any hindrance without ourselves,—any hindrance on the part of God. The only hindrance is within our own souls. We are insensible to our necessities, in their true character and largeness of extent. We have but dim and imperfect realizations of the presence of God, in the fulness and freeness of the blessings which he bestows. Hence, while we go through the external exercise of prayer, it is without life. There are words spoken, but no warmth of affection accompanying them; desires expressed, but no corresponding feeling within the bosom. Our hearts are like a stone. We feel that we want to have our lips touched with a live coal from the altar. We feel that we want the lark's wings, to soar above the earth heavenward; and the lark's

voice, to utter forth our Maker's praises. There is a seal upon the fountain, and the waters will not flow out with any degree of freedom. Our exercise is utterly flat and profitless. By reflecting on such occasions as this in our experience (and are they not, in a measure, occasions of daily experience, even with the most advanced saints?), we shall understand, better than any language could describe it, our need of the intercession of the Spirit; and shall be able to enter into the apostle's meaning when he says, "We know not what we should pray for as we ought."

II. Let me now, as proposed in the second place, *say a few words for the purpose of setting the doctrine of the Spirit's intercession in a proper light, and vindicating it from misconception and abuse.*

I have already stated that the Spirit does not himself immediately intercede with God the Father on our behalf, but that he makes intercession by assisting us in the supplications which we offer at a throne of grace. His help answers to our necessities. We have inadequate impressions of our own wants and of the riches of divine grace; and, as a consequence, our prayers are heartless and languid. The Spirit corrects our erroneous ideas; enables us to see, and not only to see, but also vividly to realise, the truth; teaches us what we should pray for; and leads us to present our supplications with sincerity and earnestness.

The doctrine of the Spirit's intercession, thus explained, will be seen to be involved in, if I should not rather say that it is identical with, the great general truth of Scripture, that every thing good in a believer is the result of the gracious operation of the Holy Ghost. To what cause are a believer's apprehensions of divine truth traceable? To the influence of the Spirit. "The natural man re-

ceiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." To what cause are a believer's devout affections and holiness of conduct traceable? To the influence of the Spirit. "The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth." "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." But a believer prays aright only in as far as he prays with correct apprehensions of divine truth in his understanding, and with holy devout affections in his heart; that is, he prays aright only in as far as he prays in a frame of soul which is the result of the Spirit's influence. What is this but just another mode of expressing the doctrine of the intercession of the Spirit?

While the Spirit assists believers in prayer in the manner described, his operations, I must observe, cannot be distinguished from the ordinary movements of their own minds. It has been made an objection to the doctrine under consideration, that it has given encouragement to fanatical pretences: and, it may be, that persons have been found to abuse this (as other truths of revelation have been abused), by pretending that they could feel some divine impulse guiding them in their devotions, distinct from the working of their own faculties. But the Scriptures are not answerable for the assertions of hypocrisy or delusion. In the case of the help which the Spirit gives us in prayer, as well as in all his other operations upon the mind, the statement of our Lord applies, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit;" that is, the Spirit *does* exert a real and blessed influence upon the mind, even though the mode of his action is inscrutable, and though we never can be conscious of any thing

within our breasts, distinguishable from the movements of our proper faculties.

True piety occupies the golden mean between the extremes of fanaticism and unbelief. While the former claims to be directly conscious of the operation of the Spirit within the soul, the latter denies the reality of such operations, because it has no direct consciousness of them. If we felt it—is the language of scepticism—we would believe it. But such an objection to the doctrine we are considering is without any good foundation. Rightly viewed, that doctrine is consistent with the most sober reason. For we cannot doubt that God is intimately present with all the souls which he has made, and that it is in his power to exert an influence, at once strong and silent, upon them. Whether we believe or no that he does this, it cannot be doubted that he is able to do it. He is not far off from any of us; in him we live and move and have our being. In these circumstances, why should the doctrine of the text be regarded as at all strange? Why should it be deemed a thing incredible that God should exert a salutary influence upon the minds to which he has unquestionable access? or that he should do so in such a manner that his direct working is not felt? If in his Word he tells us that he helps us in prayer by the influence of his Spirit,—helps us by directing, in a mode imperceptible to us, our faculties to their right and proper exercise, and if there be (as there certainly is) no ground whatever to doubt the possibility of such an operation; why should there be the smallest hesitation felt in receiving his testimony as true, and at once acknowledging the doctrine of the Spirit's intercession as resting upon a solid basis?

But, it may be asked, if a believer is not conscious of the direct assistance of the Holy Spirit in prayer, is there any indirect way in which he can be assured that he is en-

joying the aid of this divine agent? I answer, there is. In fact, he may always conclude that the Spirit is aiding him, when his supplications are presented in the manner, or with any measure of the feelings, which the Word of God requires. I repeat it: whenever a believer's heart is exercised in prayer as Scripture requires, it is because the Spirit helps him. If he is enabled to come unto God, believing that he is, and is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him,—if he is enabled to draw nigh, not in the spirit of bondage, but in that of adoption,—if he has a glorious view given him of the character of the God whom he is seeking to adore,—if he obtains such a clear insight into his own corruptions as humbles him in the dust before God, and leads him to cry with earnestness for pardon and grace to help,—if Christ is so revealed to him that he can offer up his petitions with boldness, and with the confidence that, unworthy as he is, he shall be heard for the sake of the one Mediator,—if he is so convinced of the narrowness of his own views, and of his own inability to choose his portion; and so satisfied of the wisdom and goodness of God that he is made willing to leave himself, with all that concerns him in this world, in the hand of his heavenly Father,—if his longings after the blessings of salvation are deep, and his desires for what he asks are strong,—if these, and such as these, are his feelings when he bends his knee at the throne of grace, then, though he cannot conclude that the Spirit has been helping him, from any direct consciousness he has had of the Spirit's agency, yet he may be sure that he has been receiving divine assistance, because prayer such as his is never offered up, except where the Spirit makes intercession in the soul.

III. I proceed, as proposed in the last place, to point out the propriety of the apostle's inference, from *the fact of the Spirit's intercession*, to *the certainty that the prayers*

of believers shall be heard. This, as I indicated in the introduction of the discourse, is the leading idea of the 27th verse:* "He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

When it is said that God the Father knows the mind of the Spirit—that is, knows the desires which the Holy Spirit excites in the believing suppliant's heart—something more than simple acquaintance with these is obviously intended.† God knows the blasphemies in the mind of the unbeliever, the falsehoods in the soul of the hypocrite, as well as the sincere aspirations and holy longings in the breasts of his people. But the knowledge here spoken of is one of approval; just as our Saviour said, "I am the good Shepherd, and know my sheep;" or as we read in the first Psalm, "The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous; but the way of the ungodly shall perish."

Now, the argument is this. If God looks into the heart of a saint bending before the throne of grace, and sees there emotions excited by the Spirit which he has himself imparted; if he perceives the cords of the suppliant's heart vibrating with feelings which the touch of the Spirit has awakened, and which are of a nature that he approves,—he will to a certainty answer the prayers breathed from such a heart. Prayer offered according to the will of God is never rejected; and, in the words of the apostle, the Spirit "maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." God would not first awaken us to a sense of our

* I may confirm this interpretation by the authority of Calvin:—"Quamvis nondum re ipsa vel eventu appareat preces nostras fuisse a Deo exauditas, colligit tamen Paulus in ipso precandi studio jam lucere cœlestis gratiæ præsentiam, quia nemo sancta et pia vota sponte conciperet."

† "Et hic verbi *nosse* adnotanda est proprietas: significat enim, Deum non ut novos et insolentes illos Spiritus affectus non animadvertere, vel tanquam absurdos rejicere: sed agnoscere, et simul benigne excipere ut agnitos sibi et probatos."—Calvin.

need, and then, when we besought him to supply our need out of his riches in glory in Christ Jesus, refuse to do so. He would not create a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and yet deny the bread and water of life to our craving souls. Why would he open our mouths except to fill them abundantly? Why would he lead us to cry, Abba, Father, if when we came to him as his children, and asked for bread, he meant to give us a stone, or a scorpion, when we asked a fish? Never would God excite emotions of prayer within our bosoms, and direct our eyes to a mercy-seat, and teach our stammering lips to plead with him in true and burning earnestness; and then send us empty away.

Let me ask you to attend for a moment to a principle which incidentally comes out in the apostle's reasoning; viz., that acceptable prayer possesses the characteristic of being offered "according to the will of God." We must pray in the frame of mind which God approves—with enlightened apprehensions of God and of ourselves—with faith in the appointed Mediator—with earnestness, reverence, and submission. The objects likewise of our petitions, the things for which we pray, must be agreeable to God. And should the question be put, Whence is a saint to learn what God wills him to pray for? our answer is, From the Scriptures, and from that source alone. We sometimes hear of persons having it *impressed* upon their minds that they should pray earnestly for a specific thing, which they feel an assurance of obtaining if they do thus pray for it. An individual has it impressed upon his mind, for example, that if he continue earnest in prayer for the recovery of a sick relative, the person shall recover; or he has it impressed upon his mind, that if he persevere in prayer for the conversion of an ungodly acquaintance, he shall see that man brought under the influence of divine grace. But such impressions are mere delusions. From

an impression upon the mind, a conclusion is come to, that it is the will of God to do a certain thing which he has nowhere in his Word told us that he will do. Every such conclusion is unfounded, and must be held to have been so, even in those cases where the event may happen to correspond with the expectation. Sober-minded Christians, in the inferences which they draw as to the will of God, will be careful to proceed upon nothing except the statements of God's own Word. They will judge exclusively by the law and the testimony. Their rule will be, What saith the Scripture?

It may perhaps occur to some as a difficulty, that Scripture gives no specific information about the will of God in many cases where yet every believer is irresistibly impelled to pray. To refer to the cases adduced above: an individual cannot learn from Scripture if it be the will of God to restore a sick relative to health, or to convert a certain irreligious acquaintance whom he is anxious to see brought to the knowledge of the truth. Shall he therefore not pray that the one may live, and that the other may be converted? We answer: By all means let him pray for these things—with submission, however, to the unknown and inscrutable purposes of Jehovah. Pray for whatever you desire, if the desire be not of a sinful kind. Our gracious Father in heaven invites his children to present their desires to him, even where his own will in a particular matter is not known; and we cannot tell what connection may possibly exist between the desire which a humble saint carries to a throne of grace for (suppose) some common temporal blessing, and the bestowal of that blessing by the Disposer of all events. There may be prearranged harmonies, or other relations above the ken of our philosophy, betwixt the spiritual and the material worlds. Take, therefore, all your lawful desires to a throne of grace; but when the things which you desire are not things which God has

in his Word specifically promised to grant, you must ask conditionally, with submission to whatever the event may prove his will to be. In thus asking, you of necessity ask for what is agreeable to God's will. In fact, the model terms for expressing conditionality are, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." I need hardly add, that in supplicating spiritual blessings for our own souls, we never require to employ conditional language, because we may always be certain that it is the will of God to grant us these. The promise is unequivocal, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

I have thus, as proposed *first of all*, offered some hints illustrative of our need of the Spirit's assistance in prayer; *then* endeavoured to set the doctrine of his intercession in a proper light, and to guard it against misconception and abuse; and, *lastly*, have pointed out the propriety of the apostle's inference, from the fact of the Spirit's intercession, to the certainty that the prayers of believers shall be answered. What is the practical conclusion from the whole?

Were I looking at the subject in the particular connection in which it is introduced by the apostle, the most direct practical inference would be one, which would instruct afflicted saints where they are to seek relief, when their sorrows press heavily upon them; namely, in prayer—prayer which a Divine Agent is ever at hand to assist them in presenting. David understood this well: "Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer. From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the Rock that is higher than I." Job was equally acquainted with the efficacy of prayer to impart comfort amidst abounding distress: "Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground; yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward. I would seek unto God, and

unto God would I commit my cause ; which doeth great things and unsearchable ; marvellous things without number." O ! nothing can chase a shade from the brow, nothing produce a calm in the troubled heart, nothing give acquiescence in those outward dispensations from which nature instinctively shrinks, like earnest prayer. Witness our Saviour,—the highest of all examples,—how, in the garden of Gethsemane, he "offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared." Let prayer, therefore, my Christian brethren, be your resource, as often as the dark clouds of affliction descend, in God's providence, on you.

But looking at the subject in its more general aspect,—that in which I have endeavoured to handle it,—the great practical lesson we should learn from it is, to draw nigh to God (as often as we *do* make an approach to him) in the Spirit. Let us always pray in the Spirit ; for prayers not thus presented, will be formal and worthless. Do you ask, how is this to be done ? I give a threefold answer :—

1. In the first place, *when you address yourselves to pray, solicit the assistance of the Spirit.* Seek to realise your own inability to pray as you ought, and your entire dependence on divine help. Begin your supplications with the entreaty, expressed or silently understood, that the Spirit would make intercession for you, aiding you by his blessed influences.

2. In the second place, *in order that you may enjoy the intercession of the Spirit, you must study the Word of God, so as to obtain correct views of divine truth.* Here, for example, is a trembling suppliant for whom the Spirit is interceding, by inspiring him with a firm and lively confidence in the divine mercy. The end is effected by the mind of the suppliant being led to take hold of the statements of Scripture concerning the divine mercy.

Perhaps, on the secret suggestion of the Spirit, those words from the page of inspiration appear before him—*God is love.* Or he thinks of the invitation, *Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.* It is on the perception of the truth which such passages contain, that his confidence arises. But in this, it is obviously supposed that the individual has previously become acquainted with what Scripture reveals, about Jehovah's mercy and love to sinners. Had he been ignorant of that, he could not have been the subject of the influence of the Spirit, which he now experiences. And so likewise in every other case. The Spirit makes no new revelation to those whom he aids in prayer, but merely enables them to remember, to apprehend clearly, to believe, and to feel, what the written oracles of inspiration set forth. Ignorance, therefore, of what these oracles contain, is, from the very nature of the case, incompatible with the enjoyment of his assistance in prayer. We do not question the ability of the Spirit to make known directly, to those who allow themselves to remain ignorant of the contents of Scripture, the views of God and of themselves which they ought to take, when kneeling at a throne of grace. We merely say that, in all ordinary circumstances, this is not the way in which he acts. He has chosen, for reasons the propriety of which it is not difficult to discover, to operate upon the souls of men through means,—through the instrumentality of the Word; and consequently, all who desire to obtain his assistance in prayer, must study that Word, and make themselves acquainted with its glorious discoveries of the way of life.

It is a grievous error to imagine, as some appear to do, that the extent and accuracy of a believer's knowledge of divine truth are things of minor importance. Knowledge is important for many reasons; and for this among the rest—its influence in determining the tone and character

of our devotional exercises. You habitually lack earnestness in your confessions of sin and in your petitions for mercy; and what is the cause? Possibly on examination it may prove to be that your notions regarding your fallen state are very inadequate. Study the Word of God, and see the light which it throws upon your condition as a guilty and depraved sinner; and you will then acknowledge your iniquities, and seek deliverance from them with greater liveliness of emotion. Or you cannot, in your prayers, divest yourself of an unhappy dubitancy and mistrust of God. To what cause is this traceable? It may be to some erroneous ideas regarding God. Search the Scriptures, and make yourself acquainted with what they tell of the Divine Being; and when your judgment has thus become enlightened, your prayers will in all likelihood be less mistrustful. No doubt, we often find individuals who, from the smallness of their natural capacity, or from other causes, never rise to more than the most imperfect views of the Gospel system, and who yet have much more of the spirit of genuine prayer than others who "know all mysteries." This is true; for knowledge is only one element necessary to right prayer. We do not mean that you will pray aright, however great your knowledge, if you be deficient in other things that pertain to godliness; but we say that knowledge will, by the blessing of God, materially help you to pray aright. Should your views to-day be erroneous on any point of Christian doctrine; and should an examination of the inspired rule of faith have, before to-morrow, removed the error under which you at present labour; you will be in better circumstances then than now for offering up acceptable petitions to God. You can neither pray acceptably to-day nor to-morrow except in so far as the Holy Spirit enables you; but his intercession, being exerted in the way of applying truth to the mind, will ordinarily bear a relation to the diligence which the

subjects of his intercession have employed, for the purpose of making themselves acquainted with divine truth.

Prepare yourselves, therefore, my friends, for praying in the Spirit, by seeking, through means of the daily devout study of the Scriptures, to acquire large and correct views of truth; and, when you bend your knees at a throne of grace, keep these views before your minds. Strive, while praying, to realise God as clothed with the perfections which his own Word ascribes to him. Strive at the same time to realise your own state, your guilt, your wickedness, your necessities, as they are depicted in the sacred volume. If you either neglect to make yourselves familiar with the Word of God, by the stated perusal of it; or if, when you address God in prayer, you make no effort to present to your minds those views of God and of yourselves which the Bible gives,—you cannot wonder that your exercise is greatly wanting in all the characteristics of true devotion. It would be strange if you enjoyed much of the intercession of the Spirit, while you were disregarding the instrumentality in connection with which his blessed influences are granted to believers.

3. But in the third and last place, *if you wish to pray in the Spirit, be careful not to cherish known sin in your hearts.* The ultimate end towards which the agency of the Spirit is directed, is the sanctification of those to whom he is given; and by indulging unsanctified feelings, we do all that in us lies to resist and thwart his grace. Hence the apostle Paul writes to the Ephesians, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." The Spirit cannot, of course, be the subject of grief, in the literal sense of the term; but the idea of the apostle is, that just as an earthly friend, grieved by our opposition to his efforts for our good, may be tempted to give these up, and to withdraw from us, so if, instead of co-operating with the beneficent purposes of the Holy Spirit,

we set ourselves counter to him, indulge dispositions opposed to his designs, and row against the current of holy influence by which he seeks to bear us along in the right way, he may (at least temporarily and in some measure) withdraw his influences from us. Let me suppose, then, that you are entering into your closet. You desire, in the prayers which you are about to put up, to experience the intercession of the Spirit. You begin your petitions, therefore, with an earnest entreaty for his guidance. You, moreover, endeavour to keep before your eyes those truths through which you are aware that the Spirit exerts his agency. But this is not enough. Look into your soul. Is there no sinful disposition which you are secretly nourishing? Ah! strive to repress it. Make it one of your petitions that God would enable you to repress it. Its presence in your heart grieves the Spirit, and is a bar to his influence. You pray, and yet you feel that you cannot pray. Your soul is like a disordered instrument. Its strings are out of tune. You in vain labour to awaken in them the vibrations that you wish. What can be the cause? The Spirit is not moving them. True: but why not? Think. Listen to the voice of conscience. Now conscience speaks! It tells you that you have a grudge to your neighbour in your breast, and intend to retaliate for some injury that he has done you. Does not this explain your inability to pray? Or it tells you that, in social life, you are indulging in vain amusements, or otherwise giving way to habits unbecoming a child of God. Does not this explain your inability to pray? Or it tells you, that, in the prosecution of your business, you are pursuing a course not rigidly in consonance with the high standard of Christian integrity. Does not this explain your inability to pray? Undoubtedly. You must instantly resolve, that by divine grace you will quit these sins. If you do not form the sincere purpose to do this, you cannot go on to present ac-

ceptable prayer to God. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Your purpose to continue in sin grieves the Spirit, quenches his influence. O, then, as you value his intercession, and desire to enjoy it in your approaches to the Hearer of prayer, examine your hearts, and endeavour to put away every thought and intention of wickedness! See that you can honestly appeal to the omniscient Jehovah, and say, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

XII.

THE FEAR OF THE LORD.

A SERMON PREACHED TO CHILDREN.

"Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord."—Ps. xxxiv. 11.

I WISH the children of the Sabbath-school, and the other children present, to listen to me this morning very attentively. The discourse I am going to preach is specially intended for them. I hope, indeed, that it will be of a kind from which even grown-up persons may derive profit: but it is to you, children, more immediately, that I speak. The sermon is to be yours; and I pray that the Spirit of God may help me to speak so that you may be able to understand what I say, and that it may do you good.

The subject spoken of in the text is, "The fear of the Lord." Your teachers will, perhaps, ask you next Sabbath to tell them something of what I say about this; and, in order that you may the more easily follow me, and be able to give an account of the discourse when you are asked, there are three little words which I would at the beginning desire you to fix in your minds—*why*, *how*, and *when*. If you will pay attention, I will endeavour to show you why you should fear the Lord, and how you should fear the Lord, and when you should fear the Lord.

I. I begin with the word WHY: why should you fear the Lord? 1. And the first reason that I shall mention is, that *you are his creatures.* You should fear the Lord because you are his creatures. The same God who made the sun, and moon, and stars, who made the clouds of heaven, the waters of the ocean, the earth with its trees and fields, and the lower animals that exist upon it, made us also. Man was the last and noblest of his works, created when the earth was properly prepared to be a habitation for him. The first chapters in the Bible tell us how God formed man's body out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. Now, young as you are, I think, you must feel that we ought to fear the God who made us. If any thing be proper, it surely is proper for creatures to reverence their Creator. A son honours his earthly father: how much more should we fear the Father in heaven, whose offspring we all are!

2. But I will tell you a second reason why you should fear the Lord, and it is *because he is great and holy.* No words can explain, no mind can conceive the greatness of God. He is everywhere. He knows all things. He keeps every thing in existence. His power is irresistible. He measures the seas in the hollow of his hand; he weighs the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance. He takes up the islands as a very little thing. The inhabitants of the earth are as grasshoppers before him. The pestilence comes and goes at his command. All diseases do his bidding. The thunder is but the whispering of his voice; he has his way in the whirlwind and in the storm; and the clouds are the dust of his feet. And then consider how very holy he is! The Bible tells us that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. He is of purer eyes than to look upon iniquity. Just as there are some things which you dislike so much that you would at once turn

your eyes away from them if they chanced to come in your way, so God cannot look upon iniquity. Now, if the Lord be so very great and so very holy, what cause have we, who are poor insignificant beings, and who are likewise so polluted with sin, to stand in awe of him?

3. I will mention a third reason why you should fear the Lord. It is, *because you are to be judged by him.* Yes, dear children, the day is coming when the world shall be at an end, and God will call all the sons and daughters of Adam into judgment. It will be a solemn and awful day. A great white throne shall be set up, and God will sit upon it; and the dead, small and great, shall stand before him, and the books in which all the actions of their lives are written shall be opened, and the dead shall be judged out of the things that are written in the books. Men shall then be divided into two classes,—the righteous and the wicked. The first shall have eternal life bestowed upon them; the last shall be doomed to eternal misery. Now, think for yourselves. Have we not reason to fear God, before whom we must thus appear, and from whose lips we must receive our final sentence?

There were three little words which at the beginning of the sermon I desired you to keep in mind—*why*, *how*, and *when*. I have been speaking of the first, and I hope that you have understood me, and will remember what I have said. I trust that if any boys or girls here present were asked why they should fear the Lord, they would be able to mention some reasons: as, for instance, that they are his creatures; and that he is great and holy; and that they are to be judged by him.

II. I come now to the second word, HOW; and, children, if you will continue to attend to me, I will tell you how you should fear the Lord; and, 1, in the first place, you should do this *by believing on his Son Jesus Christ.*

I mention this first, because both to young and old it is the first and great thing in religion.

Imagine to yourselves a splendid palace, full of all attractions, with every thing that can please the ear or delight the eye. Gardens surround it, where the fairest flowers bloom and the sweetest fruits grow. Those who are admitted into it are clothed in the finest raiment, have crowns of gold placed upon their heads, and harps are given them to make perpetual music with. The palace of which I speak is the palace of God's favour, and there is but one door by which an entrance into it can be obtained, and that door is Christ. I suppose that most of you know what the Lord Jesus Christ has done to procure for us the forgiveness of our sins, and to bring us into the favour of God. He laid down his life to accomplish this. He died upon the cross for sinners. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." All who come to God, must come believing in Jesus. Should you or I desire to escape the wrath of God, and to enjoy his favour, we must ask the pardon of our sins for the sake of Jesus Christ, and God will have mercy upon us.

If, therefore, dear children, you fear the Lord,—if you consider his favour as worth obtaining, his wrath as worth escaping, you will put your trust in Jesus, that Saviour who said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

2. This is the first way in which you should fear the Lord: I will now tell you a second. You should fear the Lord *by keeping constantly on your minds a sense of his presence.*

God is everywhere. He is here at this moment. We cannot see him, but he beholds us. When the service is over and you go home, he will be in your homes too.

When you are at play with your companions, God is near you. In the dark night, as well as in the bright day, the never-closing eye of God is looking upon you. When you are by yourselves (as we are accustomed to say) in a room alone, for example, God is still beside you. You may go where no human being will perceive you, but if you were to fly across the sea, or to dwell in the most distant part of the earth, God would be with you still.

Now, children, it is a part of the fear of God always to have a sense of his presence on our minds to restrain us from evil.

Let me tell you a short story to show what I mean. A wicked man, who was in the habit of stealing, once went to a neighbour's orchard for the purpose of carrying off some fruit. He entered the orchard; but before proceeding he looked cautiously round, to make sure that there were no witnesses of his crime. He looked first on this side, and next on that; he looked behind and before; and when he thought he had made sure of being unobserved, he was about to begin the work. But his son, a little boy, whom he had taken with him, and who at a Sabbath-school had learned, among other things, the commandment "Thou shalt not steal," said to him, "Father, there is a place where you have not looked." At this the man quickly asked, Where?—thinking that his son perceived some one coming, when the boy pointed upwards, as much as to say, "You cannot be hid from God." Struck by this, and feeling the justice of the reproof in his own conscience, he desisted from his intention, and left the orchard without taking a single apple.

3. But there is a third way, dear children, in which you must fear the Lord, and that is, *by always striving to obey his commandments.* The Bible tells us that God is angry with the wicked every day. Why is he angry with them? Because they are wicked and break his commandments;

because they will not do what he has told them, and because they do what he has forbidden. It is a fearful thing to have God angry with us—that God who can destroy both soul and body in hell-fire—and therefore we should be afraid of offending him, and should be careful always to obey him.

I suppose you know where the commandments of God are to be found; in his Word, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Let me tell you some of them.—One is, "Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." It is a sad thing when boys and girls do not honour their parents. It is not only acting undutifully to their parents, but it is a sin against God, and most displeasing to him.—Another commandment is, "Thou shalt not steal." Dear children, I hope you are never guilty of stealing, of taking what is not your own, either from your companions, or (without their knowledge) from your parents. Certainly, to do such a thing shows that you have no fear of God before your eyes.—Another commandment is, "Lie not one to another." When boys or girls do what is wrong, they often tell lies that they may not be found out, though this does not always serve the purpose, for their wickedness is often detected notwithstanding all their falsehoods. Now, a liar is a most hateful character,—hateful to men, and an abomination in the sight of God! You remember what happened to Ananias and his wife Sapphira, how they were struck dead for speaking untruths. And, remember, what is more than that—Scripture has said that liars "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone."

I might mention many other commandments, such as, "Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy;" and, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain;" and, "If sinners entice thee, consent thou not." But you will

learn from your teachers in the Sabbath-school, and from your parents at home, a great deal more than I can tell you now; and also, as you grow up and become able to read the Bible, you will see in it for yourselves what God requires. And what I wish to impress upon you now is the duty of always behaving in the way that you believe to be agreeable to God's will; as David says in the Book of Psalms, "Stand in awe and sin not." Never do an action, or utter a word, or display a temper, or indulge a thought, which you suppose that God in heaven would view with disapprobation.

I have thus mentioned three ways in which you should fear the Lord. Will you try and keep them in remembrance, and I will tell you again what they are? Fear him by believing on his Son Jesus Christ; by keeping constantly on your minds a sense of his presence; and by always striving to obey his commandments.

III. Having explained *why* you should fear the Lord, and *how* you should fear him, I now come to the last of the three words which I asked you to keep in mind,—WHEN—when you should fear the Lord? And the answer I give is, immediately, while you are still young: not when your brows are wrinkled, and your hairs become thin and grey, and your strength is failing; but in the very spring-time and beginning of your lives. And if you will listen to me a very little longer, I will tell you some reasons for this.

1. In the first place, you should fear the Lord when you are young, *because this will make your lives much happier than they would otherwise be.* Children sometimes think that religion is not a pleasant thing. Are they right in this opinion? No. Far from it. I will tell you what the wisest of men has said: "Wisdom's ways" (that is, the ways of true religion) "are ways of

pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Suppose one boy growing up without the fear of the Lord, refusing instruction, and giving himself up to wickedness, and another brought, while still young, to Jesus, and enabled by the Holy Spirit to love and serve Jesus, which of these two do you think would lead the happier life—the first, or the last? The last, undoubtedly. Sin may be pleasant at the time when it is committed, but it produces misery afterwards. In the Book of Revelation we are told of a little book or roll of paper which the apostle John received from an angel, and which he was directed to swallow; and in his mouth it was as sweet as honey, but as soon as he had eaten it his belly was bitter. So it is with sin. It may be sweet when you are still indulging it; but soon, O how soon, is the indulgence followed by inward bitterness! It is not so with the service of God. That is pleasant at the time, and it leaves no effects behind but such as are pleasant likewise. The way, therefore, dear children, if you wish to be happy in this world, is to begin to fear the Lord now that you are young. This will gild all your days with brightness. It will procure you many sweet enjoyments which wicked men never taste. It will save you from many distresses which they bring upon themselves. There never was a person converted in childhood who repented of having given himself to God so soon: but many, many who have grown up to be men or women before being converted, have grieved bitterly for not having given themselves to God at an earlier period.

2. I will mention a second reason why you should fear the Lord while you are young; and it is *because you may not live to be old.*

I remember reading a curious catechism written by a very distinguished man. In the catechisms which you are accustomed to learn, questions are put by the teacher, and the answers are given by the scholar; but in the catechism

to which I refer it was the reverse. The questions were put by the scholar, and the teacher gave the replies. Well, the importance and absolute necessity of religion had been shown, when the child asked next, "But must I be religious now? may I not wait till I become a man?" The reply to this was, "Ah! but there are little graves in the churchyard."

Some of you may never have been in a churchyard, to see the "little graves," covered with grass and fading flowers, that lie there in such numbers; but most of you must have seen the little coffins that from time to time are carried through the streets. You must all have known or heard of very young persons carried away by death. Can you not recollect boys or girls who used to be your playmates, but are so no longer? You missed them one day from school. You learned that they were sick. Shortly afterwards you were told that they were DEAD. Yes, dead! and your eyes shall never see them in the world again.

Now, my dear young friends, just as other children have died, death may seize you in your childhood. No little boy to whom I am speaking can tell that he shall live to be a man. No little girl before me can be certain that she shall live to be a woman. I trust that if it be God's will, you shall all grow up to be men or women; but you cannot be certain of it. As an apple formed on a tree may possibly ripen and hang on over summer, till the lateness of the season makes it fall at last, but may, on the other hand, be struck off the tree by a blow at any time, so you may possibly survive till you reach the period of old age; but you have no assurance that the stroke of the destroyer shall not cut you down to-morrow. I say, then, you must not think of waiting till you are old to fear the Lord; but you must begin to fear him now. Come to Jesus now; and then, if the candle of your life

should be extinguished before it has burned much longer, he will receive you into a bright and starry existence in heaven.

There is a very affecting story of the death of a child in the Second Book of Kings. I will read you a verse or two. "And when the child was grown," that is, grown to be a boy able to run about, "it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers. And he said unto his father, My head, my head! And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother. And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died." Now, children, what I wish you to feel is, that the very same thing may happen to you. O then let me advise you to fear the Lord now; and love the Saviour, and give yourselves up to him "while it is called to-day!"

3. I will mention a single reason more why you should fear the Lord, and it is, *because Jesus Christ desires to have little children coming to him.* Christ calls himself a shepherd. Now, a shepherd is anxious for the welfare of the lambs of the flock, as well as for the greater sheep. It is so with the Saviour. He does not neglect the older persons who have confided their souls to him; he supplies them with all the blessings which they need; but neither is he forgetful of the young. On the contrary, we are told that he "gathers the lambs with his arm and carries them in his bosom." Is not that a beautiful picture of the tender affection with which he looks upon the little ones who are his? I daresay most of you recollect what he said when he was on earth, and when some good parents were bringing their infant children to him to receive his blessing. Some of his disciples thought that children were beneath his notice (so ignorant were they at that time!), and they would have kept the parents back. But Jesus corrected them, and took the babes in his arms and blessed

them, and answered in words so sweet and encouraging that you should never forget them, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Jesus Christ is no longer on earth; he is now in heaven. But do you think that his feelings towards children have undergone any change? I am sure you do not think this. He loves them still as much as he did then, and is as anxious as he then was that they should come to him. You cannot, indeed, go to him so as to see him, and hear him speak, and be taken up in his arms; but you can pray to him, and he will hear you; you can look to him as a Saviour, and he will wash you from your sins in his blood; you can trust in him, and he will protect you; you can serve him, and he will love you.

Have you understood these reasons, dear children? I will tell you again what they are. You should fear the Lord while you are young, because this will make your lives happier than they would otherwise be; because you may not live to be old; and because Jesus Christ desires to have little children coming to him.

I have now said all that I think necessary as to WHY, and HOW, and WHEN you should fear the Lord; and now, before I close the sermon, let me entreat you to lay these things to heart. Be attentive to your parents when they speak to you on divine things. Be anxious to learn all that you can from the teachers who are so kind as to instruct you in the Sabbath-school. And ask God to give you wisdom that you may understand the truth. David prayed, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law;" how much more have you, little children, need to offer such a prayer! Seek, therefore that you may be taught of God. And may he bless you all! My supplication is that every one of you may enjoy as much happiness in this world as is really for your

good, and that when your life on earth comes to a close, you may be taken to join the company of Christ's people in that better land where there is no more sin, and, therefore, no more sorrow.

I may be permitted to add a few words to those present who are no longer children. The duty of which I have this morning been speaking, is one, dear brethren, incumbent upon you no less than upon the young persons who have been more immediately addressed. To you equally with them, Scripture and reason unite in saying, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

Let me inquire, then, whether or not you are spending your days in God's fear? I trust, indeed I am persuaded, that not a few are doing so, but it would be a charity as unkind as false to suppose that it is so with all. It cannot be doubted, though the conviction is a very sad one, that of the men and women on whose faces I now look, a considerable number are yet "without God."

If my persuasions could prevail with these persons, I would have them think seriously of their state. I make a calm appeal to their judgments. I would urge them to ask themselves such questions as these,—questions which sober reason must aknowledge to be proper:—Do I intend to live all my days without the fear of the Lord, as I am now doing? If I should do so, what will the result be?—must I not die without hope, and have my portion among the lost? If I intend to turn to God, when do I mean to do it? Is not the present time the best? Is it not the only time that I can calculate upon? Is it not the time when I *would* take the decisive step, if I were sincere in resolving to turn at all? If I should be cut down in my iniquities, while thinking of a future repentance, will not my blood lie, deservedly lie, upon my own head? What keeps me from turning to God?—The love of sinful pleasure.

Well, but have I in my experience found the pleasures of sin to be really so sweet as the human mind naturally supposes them to be? Do I soberly believe that a life spent in sin would afford more solid pleasure than one spent in true religion? And at all events, are worldly pleasures, be they substantial or not, of such value that for their sakes I will be content to risk the salvation of my immortal soul? I do not wish, my friends, to appeal to your feelings. I place myself before the tribunal of unimpassioned reason, and I call upon you to say, in the exercise of the rational faculties which your Maker has given you, whether you are right or wrong in casting away the fear of the Lord.

I have no doubt that if this inquiry be met in a calm and solemn manner, you will answer that you are WRONG. What then! I exhort you to bring yourselves to a point, and to resolve what you will do. "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." If religion be a dream,—if the ideas of moral relation, accountability, guilt, a judgment-seat, heaven and hell, be but the visions of a fevered imagination,—then by all means live as you list—live for the world and its passing enjoyments. In that case, follow the maxim, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." But if the things to which I have referred be solemn and eternal realities, O, prove yourselves to be rational beings, by acquainting yourselves with God that you may be at peace. "For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

XIII.

SERVANTS AND MASTERS.

"Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ: not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him."—EPH. vi. 5–9.

I TRUST that I need not caution you against supposing that the duties which we owe to our fellow-men constitute "all righteousness." Far from it. There is a large class of obligations, the most important of all, under which we lie immediately to our Creator. The notion, so prevalent in the world, that the fulfilment of common social obligations, is every thing that is necessary to entitle one to the character of a good man, is most erroneous. Reason itself teaches that our characters are vitally defective, if, besides conducting ourselves aright in our transactions with our fellow-men, we are not habitually inspired with love and thankfulness, with holy fear and devout submission, to the Being who made and upholds us, whose we are and whom we are bound to serve. "Thou shalt love the

Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind; this is the first and great commandment;" and, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," is but "the second." In fact, the ordinary duties of life are then only performed as they ought to be, when they are done under a sense of responsibility to God: "As ever in the great Taskmaster's eye."

Nor, I trust, do you need to be warned against making the faithful performance of the ordinary duties of life a ground, even in the smallest measure, of hope towards God. Salvation is of grace; "not of works, lest any man should boast." Pardon and acceptance are obtained, not as the reward of our own meritorious deeds, but through the atoning sacrifice and perfect righteousness of Emmanuel. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." God "hath made us accepted in the Beloved, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." But because salvation is gratuitous, it does not follow that the practice of holiness in any of its branches is unnecessary, or of small importance. "This is a faithful saying," writes Paul to Titus, "and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works." Conduct is the test of faith. It is an invariable mark of believers, that, while "not going about to establish a righteousness of their own," but "submitting themselves unto the righteousness of God," they hate wickedness, mourn over their shortcomings, and earnestly wish and labour to be conformed to the image of Christ. The necessary influence of the truths of the Gospel, where one has been enabled by the Spirit of God to apprehend and believe them, is to destroy evil dispositions, to turn away from sinful habits, and to dispose to the right discharge of every obligation under which the individual lies, whether to God or to man.

These remarks are designed as prefatory to an exposition of the exhortations which the apostle addresses in our text to servants and masters respectively. You will understand me, at the very outset, as protesting against the prevalent opinion that the duties springing out of what may be called our human relations, are of exclusive importance; as if, besides "doing justice" and "showing mercy," we were not required "to walk humbly with our God." You will understand me as no less anxious to lift my voice against the wide-spread delusion, that if one be but a faithful servant, or an equitable and kind master, and attentive to other relative duties of a like description, he may rest secure in the prospect of appearing before the tribunal of his Judge. These are fatal mistakes. But on the other hand, my friends, the duties belonging to your respective positions in life, as husbands or wives, parents or children, masters or servants, must not be neglected. They must be performed conscientiously, else you cannot be Christians. On whatever grounds you may wish to persuade yourselves that you have betaken yourselves to Christ as your Saviour; whatever spiritual experience you may conceive yourselves to have gone through; whatever communion with God you may think that you are accustomed to enjoy; whatever delight you may feel in waiting upon divine ordinances;—I must still solemnly tell you that, if you come short in matters of common morality, your religion is vain.

DUTIES OF SERVANTS.

We begin with servants. And here we shall notice *first*, the general duty incumbent upon them,—obedience: "Be obedient," &c.; *secondly*, the kind of obedience required of them,—they are to obey "in fear and trembling,"—"in singleness of their heart,"—"not with eye-service, as men-pleasers"—and "from the heart with good will;" *thirdly*, the motives that should influence Christian servants in

yielding such obedience—namely, that, in serving those who are their masters according to the flesh, they serve Christ, and shall be rewarded by him.

I. In the first place, then, the general duty of servants is obedience; not unlimited indeed, but obedience within certain well-marked and easily defined bounds. "Servants be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh." It is not necessary for practical purposes to determine exactly the class which the apostle had immediately in his view in using the term "servants," whether slaves, or persons who rendered voluntary service for hire. I suppose he meant both. As, however, slavery is happily unknown in our land, I shall adapt my remarks to the case of those whose service is free; and shall speak of that large and important class, of which so many representatives are before me, who have, of their own accord, placed themselves in the employment of others. They are commanded to be "obedient to them that are their masters according to the flesh."

This last clause—"according to the flesh"—deserves notice, as marking the field within which the control of an employer over those in his service is confined. An earthly master is my master only according to the flesh. He has no lordship over the spirit. I may put my time, my bodily strength, my skill, my knowledge, at his disposal; but I cannot give him, and he cannot receive, dominion over my conscience. He may have a right to say to me with authority, Go on this errand,—or, Do this piece of work; but he cannot have a right to say to me, Receive this opinion,—believe this truth. Man is undoubtedly responsible for his belief; not however to his fellow-man, but to God. Should an employer claim from those whom he employs, that they should think as he does in matters of religion, or in any thing else, the answer should be, Nay, we are your servants according to the flesh, but no further.

The clause in question deserves notice, likewise, as implying that we have a Master not according to the flesh. One is your Master, even Christ. Hence arises another limitation of the obedience which earthly superiors are entitled to require. A Christian cannot be bound in any circumstances to do what Christ has told him not to do; or (what amounts to the same thing) to do what is in itself morally wrong. The obligation to obey a master according to the flesh ceases, falls to the ground, becomes necessarily null and void, when it runs counter to the higher obligation of subjection to Him who is "Lord of all." Should a shopkeeper, for instance, desire any in his service to press the sale of an article by representing it as of a certain value when it is not, or by stating that it is free from flaw and defect when it is not, or by saying that its original cost was so much when it was not,—a respectful but firm refusal should be given: for the precepts of Christ are, "Lie not one to another;" and again, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, ... whatsoever things are lovely and of good report, ... think on these things."

But with the exceptions mentioned, the rule of obedience is binding. No one is called upon to yield his opinions to another. No one is called upon to break God's commandments at the bidding of another. But in other respects, if you are Christian servants, you will be unfailing in your obedience to your masters, doing, while you continue in their employment, what they require, in the manner which they indicate, and to the best of your ability.

II. This leads me, however, to advert, in the second place, to the kind of obedience which Christian servants are enjoined to yield to their masters. They are to obey "with fear and trembling;" they are to obey "in singleness of heart;" they are to obey, "not with eye-service, as men-

pleasers;" they are to obey "from the heart, with good will."

1. First, *with fear and trembling.*

The apostle does not, of course, mean that Christian servants are to be actuated by a timid and crouching spirit. He does not mean that they are to obey out of a servile dread of bringing down upon themselves such punishments as tyrannical masters may have it in their power to inflict. No. The Gospel gives a different tone to the character. It imparts a dignity to the individual who is really under its influence; and teaches him to bear himself with a modest manliness in his intercourse with those who are his earthly superiors. But the phrase, "with fear and trembling," whether used with reference to the obedience due to God, or with reference to the obedience due to man, expresses simply solicitude not to give offence. Obey your masters in every thing lawful; be very anxious to avoid whatever they might properly be offended with, or even whatever they might be likely to take offence at causelessly. A constant desire to fulfil your duty to those to whom you owe service to its uttermost iota, is perfectly consistent with the self-respect and freedom from servility which Christianity, far from forbidding, enjoins and fosters.

I would particularly specify one thing which should make Christian servants habitually go about the offices incumbent upon them in a spirit of "fear and trembling;" I mean, the injury likely to result to the cause of the Redeemer from any instances of disobedience on their part. Suppose, for example, that a domestic servant, a humble and sincere believer, is placed in divine providence in an ungodly family. If, even on a single occasion, she should be guilty of disobedience to lawful injunctions, would not this one sinful act tend materially to destroy the effect of the testimony she bears for Christ? Were she meekly and steadily doing her duty towards those into whose em-

ployment she has entered, she would be a mirror from whose surface a constant though silent reflection of the loveliness of religion was taking place; and an unbelieving mistress, or an unbelieving fellow-servant, who looked upon her, and saw how excellent the practical fruits of religion appeared in her, might thus be won to the Saviour. But a single act of disobedience would probably spoil the example of a year. What "fear and trembling" should the consideration of this induce in the servant's mind! Not the fear and trembling of a base, but of a generous and excellent nature; fear and trembling lest by unfaithfulness or indolence she should allow reproach to fall upon her profession.

2. Another characteristic which should distinguish the obedience of Christian servants is "*singleness of heart.*" This expression is the reverse of insincerity and duplicity. It is opposed to all pretence of being actuated by one set of motives when you are mainly or chiefly under the influence of a different set; or of aiming at one result when you have in fact quite a different object in view. An individual advocates some cause of public interest. He professes to be moved only by a sense of the great social advantages that will result from having the views in behalf of which he pleads carried out. The general good, he tells you, is the consideration, the sole consideration, that weighs with him. Perhaps all the while he cares nothing for the social advantages he is so fluent in specifying. He has some private purpose of his own in view, which he diligently conceals, and he merely makes the general good a stalking-horse to gain the accomplishment of this. Such would be a clear instance of the want of "singleness of heart." In like manner, servants—to confine myself to the case to which our text refers—often do what their masters enjoin; do it punctually, diligently, ably, and to the entire satisfaction of their masters; but their obedience is

vitiated as to its essential character, because it is not rendered in "singleness of heart."

To illustrate my meaning, I will take the case of a young man who manifests uncommon zeal for the interests of his employer, and labours with all his talents to render his employer's business prosperous and flourishing, though all that he really cares for is—himself. He conceives that the course he is following is that likely in the long run to secure his own interests most effectually. He will display his capacity and steadiness. He will ingratiate himself with his employer, and obtain his influence to aid him in his ultimate views; and in this, and other ways, he calculates upon reaping the reward of his present exertions. The obedience of such a servant is not (so far as we have considered it) morally worthy of much, if any, commendation. No doubt, ask his employer what his opinion of him is, and he will answer that he could not wish a more attentive and excellent young man. Still, in a moral point of view, the want of "singleness of heart" spoils all. Mark me! I do not deny that it is proper enough for a young man to desire to push his way in the world, and to rise to respectable and (if he can accomplish it) opulent circumstances. Nor do I deny that a sense of the benefit likely to accrue to himself from faithful service rendered to an employer, should be a motive, united with others, to render him faithful. But I do deny that if the young man be a Christian, his obedience will be *merely* of this description. If a Christian, he will obey his master because obedience is in itself a duty. He will labour to promote the success of his master's business because he is bound to feel an interest in that, from the very relation which he holds to his master, and altogether irrespectively of the character for faithfulness and zeal which he may thereby establish for himself, and from which he may in the end procure personal advantage. The practice of religious duty in all its

branches tends to the benefit of the individual practising it. But it must be practised for its own sake, as right in itself, and not for the sake of benefit, in order that the practice of it may deserve to come under the head of Christian virtue.

3. But, again, servants are enjoined to be obedient to their masters according to the flesh, "*not with eye-service as men-pleasers.*"

The meaning of "eye-service" cannot fail to be understood by all hearing me. A workman, while his employer's eye is upon him, labours diligently; when the employer's eye is removed, he becomes slack. If engaged to work by time, he does not scruple to trifle as much, and to fatigue himself as little as he safely can. He says, "The master will never know but that I have been working hard all day." This is eye-service. Now, there is a thorough lack of conscientiousness here. Such behaviour implies mingled falsehood and dishonesty. It shows a forgetfulness of the truth that God in heaven is continually taking cognizance of the manner in which our duties are discharged, and that we ought to live every moment as in his sight. No Christian servant can possibly act thus as a general thing; and a Christian servant should be particularly careful never to act thus in a single instance. The rule which servants should observe, the only rule in the observance of which they can feel that they are walking consistently with a Christian profession, a rule, the habitual neglect of which will, beyond all controversy, stamp them either as totally destitute of religion, or as possessing it only in the most scanty measure,—is, to do when left entirely to themselves as they would do when the master's eye was overseeing their labours.

The appended clause, "as men-pleasers," has reference to the idea which will presently fall to be considered more particularly, that in obeying an earthly master, servants

should regard themselves as yielding obedience to God. The realization of this will effectually guard against mere eye-service. Do you perform the duties of your station diligently when you are under the direct inspection of the earthly master to whom you owe obedience? Remember, then, that you are never removed from the inspection of Him who, even in matters of a common temporal character, is your ultimate and highest master. Eye-service, and nothing more, may be expected from those who are but men-pleasers. Eye-service is the utmost length to which an individual will go if he has no desire beyond that of securing the approval of man. If a regard to human approbation or favour is all that influences me in the discharge of my functions as a servant, I will have no inducement to be faithful, except in so far as my conduct is (or is likely to become) matter of human observation. But the believer, on the other hand, influenced by a higher motive than the wish to please men, will be as faithful to his employers in points of which he knows that they can never take account as in others.

4. Once more, servants are enjoined to obey their masters "*from the heart, with good will.*"

Nothing is more beautiful in a servant than cordiality of obedience. Cheerfulness in doing a piece of service doubles, trebles, the value of the service. It not only makes it unspeakably more grateful to the master to whom it is rendered, but without this quality there is no moral excellence or worth in the act at all. Reluctant virtue is no virtue. Yet how often are the orders,—the lawful orders,—the proper and necessary orders of a master or mistress obeyed, and that too by servants professing godliness, in a discontented, muttering, sullen manner; the countenance, the tone of voice, and the whole bearing of the person lodging their protest against the act which the hand is perforce obliged to discharge! Such disagreeable

obedience, worse almost than disobedience, is like "vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes." Should there be any Christian servants hearing me who are at all given to conduct of this kind, I would ask them seriously to reflect upon the dishonour they bring upon the name of Christ. I would ask them if such demeanour is worthy of them? if it is becoming their profession? if it is suitable to those whom God has called unto his kingdom and glory? I would ask them, in a word, how they can thus conduct themselves and yet continue to think themselves believers?

Some one will perhaps say, "I have got an ill-tempered, imperious, and unreasonable master. How can I yield a pleasant obedience to him? I would obey him from the heart with the utmost good will were he kind or reasonable; but I am unable to endure patiently the treatment he subjects me to." Now, such cases do exist, and it is much to be lamented that it is so. It is unfortunate that individuals whom God has placed in the position of masters, should, by unkindly treatment, give occasion to any to use such a plea as I have mentioned. Still the sin of one man does not excuse the sin of another. I grant that where a master is unkind or unreasonable, the duty enjoined in the text becomes difficult; but it is the part of a Christian, when placed in circumstances where the exercise of a particular grace is hard, to be so much the more on his guard against the temptations to which he is exposed, and to be so much the more earnest in supplicating divine help to keep him from falling. I do not mean that a servant who has chanced to get a bad master should timidly and slavishly submit to his passion and caprice without remonstrance, and (if remonstrance fails) without taking such steps towards a change of position as prudence and self-respect may point out. But what I say is,—and I wish servants to feel that such is the law of

Christ,—the text proves it to be the law of Christ,—that so long as circumstances determine you to remain in the service of another, you should make up your minds to carry out his requirements, even when these are neither very reasonable in themselves nor very kindly expressed: you should make up your minds to carry them out to your utmost ability, without allowing your master's fault to interfere with the thoroughness of your discharge of your duty; avoiding sycophancy certainly on the one hand (a disposition most unsuitable in a Christian), but with no less care avoiding refractoriness, or sullenness, or murmuring on the other. "Servants," writes the apostle Peter, "be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously."

III. Let me now notice the motives which the apostle adduces as those which should influence Christian servants in yielding to their masters the obedience which has been described. And these are, first, that in serving those who are their masters according to the flesh, they in fact serve Christ; and, secondly, that they shall in due time obtain from Christ a reward corresponding to their obedience.

1. The first consideration is, that *in serving their*

earthly masters, they are obeying Christ. This motive is so important that it is not brought forward once or twice merely, but is presented three times in the course of the short passage under review: "Be obedient," the apostle says, "to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, *as unto Christ.*" Again, "Not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but *as the servants of Christ.*" And yet again, "With good will doing service, *as to the Lord, and not to men.*"

We may pause to remark with what a dignity this invests service. It would not be felt that any employment, however menial or low in the world's estimation, was indeed menial or low if we had been directly appointed to it by the Saviour. Christ's commission to fill a post, whatever that post might be, would make it an honourable station. John Newton in one of his papers happily expresses what I have in view, when he says, "If two angels were sent down from heaven with a divine command, one to rule an empire and the other to sweep a street in it, they would have no inclination to choose employments." Assuredly they would not. The one would sweep his street with as little sense of degradation as the other would have in sitting upon his throne; there being no room for the notion of degradation in either case, since their parts had been severally allotted to them by God. Now, Christ has assigned to his people who are in the condition of servants the places which they occupy. He has done this, not indeed by direct personal appointment, but through the arrangements of his providence; and therefore in the discharge of their duties they should feel that they are performing a high and honourable work, fulfilling the behests of Him whose pleasure the most exalted of created beings would rejoice in any capacity to execute.

It is not, however, the dignity with which the consideration in question invests service so much as the obliga-

tion to obedience under which it lays servants, that we have now to do with. The thought surely is one which should have great practical weight, that disobedience in any particular to our masters according to the flesh is not disobedience to them alone, but also to the Lord Jesus. Should a domestic servant, for example—(I make no apology for adducing what some may consider trivial cases; remembering as I do the words of Scripture, "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much")—should a domestic servant be told by her mistress to go on a certain errand, and not to loiter by the way, but to return home as quickly as possible, then, since Christ in his providential arrangements has placed the individual in that position of service, with the general injunction to be obedient to lawful commands, the order not to loiter on the errand on which she is sent is as binding as if it came directly from the lips of the Redeemer; and if it be transgressed, a violation of the Redeemer's commandments will be committed.

2. The other consideration brought forward by the apostle to influence Christian servants to obey their masters is, that *they shall in due time obtain from Christ the reward of their obedience*,—"knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free."

Mankind are universally swayed by the fear of punishment on the one hand, and the hope of reward on the other. But while worldly men look only to such rewards and punishments as are experienced in this life, the Christian extends his view to the life to come; and by the glass of faith beholds things invisible to the natural eye,—beholds the awful consequences of sin as felt in eternity, and the everlasting glory which is to be hereafter the portion of the righteous. I may admit,—indeed, I could not only

admit, but I would desire to impress it upon you as important truth,—that actions done solely through the hope of reward or the fear of punishment, whether the rewards and punishments be present or future, are essentially defective morally considered; because virtue, in order to be genuine, must be loved and practised for its own sake, as right in itself and agreeable to the will of God. Still, formed as we are, rational beings, capable of anticipating the consequences of our actions, it is impossible for us to be indifferent to the effect which will follow this or that line of behaviour, and Scripture speaks to us on the supposition that such is the case. The prospect of future blessedness is held out to believers, in the Word of God, not certainly as the fundamental reason why they should be holy, but at least as an encouragement to them to practise holiness.* Moses "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of reward;" and our Saviour himself, "for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame." Now, this is the motive which the apostle presents to servants in the verse before us. Be obedient, he says, to them that are your masters according to the flesh, because the Lord Jesus shall richly reward his people who, from proper principles, and in a right manner, discharge the duties of the stations he has called them to occupy.

There is a tacit allusion to the idea that possibly servants may be placed in circumstances where their obedience will not be properly appreciated by those to whom it is immediately rendered. A servant may have an unjust

* It is in what it teaches on this point that Paley's Moral Philosophy, which has been extensively used in Educational Institutions as a text-book on Ethics, is most radically defective. Virtue he defines as "the doing good to mankind, in obedience to the will of God, *and for the sake of everlasting happiness.*"

and thankless master; and in such a case, when enjoined to be obedient, he may be tempted to say to himself,—what is the use of it? No efforts will please or satisfy the master whom I serve. Let me weary myself out with laborious effort for the advancement of his interests, what good will it do me? Will he give me any recompense for my toil? None. Shall I then persist, like those who cast pearls before swine, in the exercise of unrequited faithfulness? Now, what is the apostle's answer? Even though you should be made painfully to feel that your obedience is not appreciated or requited as it deserves, by the master to whom it is immediately rendered, it is appreciated by Christ, and shall be requited by him. Not one act of faithfulness done to an earthly superior from a regard to the glory of God, and in a spirit of compliance with his precepts, shall pass without its recompense. He who has placed monarchs on their seats of eminence has placed servants likewise in their stations; and if both, with equal faithfulness to him, discharge their respective social duties, he will reward the latter as richly as the former. "Whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free."

THE DUTIES OF MASTERS.

In the course of the above exposition of the duties of servants, I have had occasion incidentally to refer to those of masters; but I come now to consider what is said to masters directly: "And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him."

I. Here the first thing laid down is, that *the duty of masters to their servants is the exact counterpart of what they expect, and properly expect, from their servants.* This is the meaning of the phrase, "Do the same things unto

them." They are under certain obligations to you; you should feel that you are under corresponding obligations to them. In the material universe the action of one body upon another is accompanied by a similar and equal action of the second upon the first. There is no such thing as an orb in space attracting others and not being similarly attracted towards them. So in society, Christ has appointed that whatever duties are to be rendered to an individual by his fellow-men, there will invariably be corresponding duties, which he is bound to render in return. Obligation between two parties never lies altogether on one side, it is always mutual.

This general principle is capable of a wide, and (where persons are disposed to do the will of God) of a very easy application. Take one example, out of many, of the manner in which it may be applied. Those of you who are masters expect to have work faithfully performed by your servants. Then you must "do the same things," by allowing them just remuneration. On *their* side, they place their labour, their time, their skill, their knowledge, at your disposal: they are entitled, for what they surrender, to an equivalent in the form of suitable wages. It may be deemed unnecessary for me to touch upon this; because, in the state of things that exists among us, the wages which a servant is to receive are for the most part made matter of stipulation; and a master would scarcely have it in his power, even were he so inclined, to deprive those whom he employs of what is their due. Still, I would observe, that a Christian master ought to be disposed, altogether apart from its being a matter of legal necessity, to give his servants what is just and equal. Besides, there may be very often real, where there is no legal, injustice done. Some masters—as if their servants were but instruments for enabling them to amass a fortune, and not rational fellow-creatures to whom they owe reciprocal duties

—seem anxious to make all the profit by them which they can, at the least possible expense; heedless of essential wrong which a servant may suffer. Now, I would earnestly beseech those of you who are Christians, and do not wish to dishonour the name of Christ, to guard against this, and every thing of a like description. The apostle James says regarding the unjust masters of his time, "Behold, the hire of the labourers which have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth." I hope that there is not an employer here, against whom such an accusation could strictly and literally be brought. But if you are Christians, be not content with an abstinence from gross forms of injustice. Add to this—as what the law of Christ requires, and what is alone worthy of your calling—a habitual respect in the minutest particulars to the claims of your servants; and that, where the matter is left entirely to the decision of your own consciences, no less than in other circumstances. Make it, in a word, your invariable rule to requite them as you, if you were in their position and they in yours, would wish, and could reasonably expect, to be requited.

II. In the second place, *masters, in the discharge of the duties which they owe to their servants, are required to forbear threatening.* I said, when speaking of servants, that nothing was more beautiful in them than cordiality of obedience. I now add regarding masters, that nothing is more beautiful in them than gentleness in the exercise of authority. Cheerfulness, I observed, in doing a piece of service doubles the value of the service. Am I wrong in adding that pleasantness in exacting a piece of service makes it twice as easy?

A violent bearing is not the plan to secure obedience. It does only harm. Its tendency is to stir up angry and

refractory passions in those towards whom it is manifested. The spirit of a man naturally recalcitrates against any thing in the form of menace. A servant when threatened is apt, unless restrained by divine grace, to reply in language of defiance; or, if prudence compel him to be silent, he may keep his lips closed only to nurse feelings of irritation in his breast. "Who is this," his secret, sullen reflection may be, "that lords it over me, and threatens me as if I were a dog? Does he think that he will get me in this way to work for him more diligently or faithfully? He will find himself mistaken." Thus a most unchristian disposition is produced in the mind of the servant, for the fault of which the master is partly responsible,—a disposition which issues in any thing rather than in the hearty obedience which the servant ought to render, and otherwise might have rendered. But even though threatening were the plan to secure obedience, it should be scrupulously avoided as a violation of the law of Christ. "Bitterness and wrath, and anger and clamour," are quite incompatible with a Christian profession, in whatever station, or towards whomsoever, they are exercised.

A peculiarly offensive and criminal form of that "threatening" which the text forbids, is profane swearing. There are masters who are accustomed to swear at their servants, if a piece of work has not been done as they expected, or if they wish to urge their servants on to greater diligence in something which they have in hand. Upon any here, if such there be, who are chargeable with this habit, I shall press but one consideration. I might speak of many things that ought to keep them from giving way to the practice in question; but I shall omit every thing else, and speak only of the guilt which they thereby bring upon their souls. What an insult to the Majesty of heaven,—what a manifest proof of the absence of every thing like a spark of true godliness,—what a profanation of all that is, and should be

held, most sacred, are involved in the utterance of a single oath! It is obviously absurd, it is the most palpable of all contradictions, for a master, who ever and anon breaks out into profane abuse of his servants, because they have not (he conceives) laboured so diligently as they might have done, to call himself a Christian, and to profess to fear God! Assuredly "there is no fear of God before his eyes."

Far from profanely abusing your servants—far from making them objects of abuse at all—I trust that you, my hearers, who have servants in your employment, will manifest, in your intercourse with them, a uniform gentleness and friendly sympathy of manner. That is a noble command in the First Epistle of Peter, "Honour all men." There is something about all men, not excepting those in the most humble circumstances, entitling them to honour. Honour even your servants. Teach them self-respect by invariably addressing them respectfully. They have sensibilities, often as fine as your own, which the law of Christ forbids you unnecessarily to wound. The fact of their being in an inferior worldly station to that which you fill, will lead you, if you possess any of the generosity of nature which the Gospel produces, not to treat them as if they were creatures of a lower grade, but rather to consider how you can properly soften the difference betwixt you and them, and make it less felt. If they are your brethren in Christ, while this should not, and will not, make them forward and presuming, it will be an additional reason for your regarding and constantly acting towards them in a mild and affectionate spirit.

III. In the third place, the apostle mentions *a motive which should lead masters to conduct themselves as we have described; namely, that they are themselves in subjection to a Master who will call them to account for their*

actions: "knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him."

No earthly master wields an irresponsible authority. If I transport myself in imagination to a country where servitude exists in its most absolute and accursed forms; where the servant is a slave; where the law, unworthy of the sacred name of law, permits a master to violate at will the most sacred duties he owes to those who labour in his house or cultivate his fields,—to lash them,—to withhold from them the means of secular and religious knowledge,—to break, as caprice or the love of gain, or still baser passions may dictate, the most sacred domestic bonds;—even there, and with respect to the very acts which the law sanctions, there is no such thing as irresponsible authority. The slaveholder, amidst the outrages of which he is daily guilty, may perchance say to himself, "None can call me to account for what I do:" but this is a delusion. At a human tribunal, indeed, he may never require to stand. No accuser may charge him before his fellow-men for his misdeeds. But there is a higher bar where he shall undoubtedly be arraigned,—a bar where every instance of injustice, every act of cruelty, every tyrannical command, every harsh and menacing word, every look and thought of bitterness, shall be brought forth against him. The dead, small and great, must stand before God. "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Servants and masters shall stand together at the last day; the latter, to answer for their discharge of their duties towards their servants; and the former to answer for their discharge of their duties towards their masters. Endeavour, my friends, habitually to realise this grand consideration. Endeavour (I speak to those of you who are masters) in all your dealings with your servants, in all you do, and in all you say to them, to be sisting yourselves before the judgment-seat of Christ, and consider-

ing what sentence he shall pronounce upon your conduct. You will seldom act wrong, if you make a point of always acting as you in conscience think that Christ would have you to do, and as you believe that you will wish to have done, when, at his voice, all who sleep in their graves arise, —they who have done good, to the resurrection of life; and they who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

XIV.

BELIEVERS GLORYING IN TRIBULATION.

"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope."—Rom. v. 3, 4.

In the passage of which our text forms a part, the apostle is specifying some of the leading privileges connected with a state of justification. Among these, he first mentions, peace with God, and the permanent establishment of believers in the divine favour. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access* by faith into this grace wherein we stand." He next refers to the future happiness in store

* This clause has not unfrequently been misunderstood, as if it described a privilege distinct from peace with God and establishment in his favour,—the privilege, namely, of access to God in prayer. But this is not the apostle's meaning. In the words, "by whom also we have access" (or introduction) "into this grace" (or gracious condition), "wherein we stand,"—in these words, appended to the statement in ver. 1, the apostle merely intimates, that it was through Christ that he and his fellow-believers began to be objects of the divine favour, as well as continued to enjoy it subsequently. They did not commend themselves to God by their own righteousness; and, having done so, receive for Christ's sake rewards of a higher kind than their own righteousness merited. No. The commencement of God's favour, as well as the middle and the end of it,—its dawning ray, as well as its maturer and fuller splendour,—took origin from Christ's obedience to the death in their room.

for God's people, the anticipation of which is calculated to fill the mind of a believer with so much delight: "and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." The glory of God is that glorious portion in the life to come which God has prepared for them that love him. The condition of a saint now may be mean; but he has splendid prospects in view. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. . . . And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." This brings us to the words which we have chosen for present consideration; and in which the apostle mentions, as another privilege of a justified state, that believers can extract comfort even from the afflictions which befall them in the course of their earthly pilgrimage. "And not only so,"—not only do we exult in the expectation of future blessedness,—"but" (what will to unconverted men seem more strange) "we glory in tribulations also." And the explanation of a circumstance apparently so extraordinary is added: "knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope."

"We glory in tribulations." The apostle had, no doubt, immediately in view the peculiar tribulations connected with a profession of Christianity in primitive times. The early converts, for their adherence to the cause of the Redeemer, were exposed to the reproach of the world, to the spoiling of their goods, to imprisonment, and often to death itself: but, far from being overcome by persecution, they were enabled, through the help of God, to triumph in it, and to furnish many a splendid instance of obedience to the Saviour's command, "Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you." But though the apostle may have had afflictions of this particular description in his mind when he penned the words before us, his statement is equally applicable to afflictions of every species.

In all kinds of trouble, whether wearing the form of injuries done us by our fellow-men, or coming more directly from the hand of God in the shape of losses, sickness, and bereavement, the believer may, and ought to, glory in his sufferings.

If we ask, how can this be? our text (as mentioned above), while stating the fact, furnishes at the same time the explanation. Suppose a piece of machinery with three wheels, the first moving the second, and the second moving the third. Call the first wheel Patience, the second Experience, and the third Hope. Affliction brings the first of these into play: "tribulation worketh patience." That again acts upon the second: "patience worketh experience." And that in its turn moves the third: "experience worketh hope." Hence, as a final result, affliction confirms and strengthens the Christian's hope,—that hope of the glory of God in which he rejoices,—a hope which "maketh not ashamed." If this be so, a Christian may well comfort himself in affliction, cold and bitter to his palate though its waters confessedly be.

I. Let us examine the steps of this magnificent argument separately; of which the first is, "tribulation worketh patience." By patience the apostle means resignation to the divine will; an unmurmuring acquiescence in the dispensations of providence, however trying and severe.

Patience is not unfeeling indifference. Strike a stone: it receives the blow without complaint, yet it has not patience. In like manner, some persons are of so apathetic a constitution, so blunt and dull in their affections, that many things which would awaken the most lively sorrow in ordinary men fail to move *them;* not because their patience is above the common degree, but because their sensibility is beneath it. Patience is not stoicism. It was

deemed a virtue with a class of ancient philosophers to be superior to affliction,—to shed no tears and exhibit no discomposure whatever might betide,—to show one's-self free from the weakness of giving way to grief, and to wear a countenance the same in prosperity and in adversity. But "Jesus wept." There was no stoicism in his case, when, drawing near to the grave of a beloved friend, he groaned in spirit and was troubled, and said, "Where have ye laid him?" Patience supposes that an individual feels: he is not a stone. It supposes that his feelings have full vent, and are allowed to flow out in their natural expression: he is not that unlovely thing, formed by placing a constraint upon all the finest features of humanity,—a stoic. Patience is neither the abnegation of feeling nor the violent suppression of it. Quite the contrary. But if an individual, while deeply moved by some afflictive dispensation in providence, recognises the hand of God in what has befallen him; if, looking beyond the mere second causes which may have been instrumental in producing the lamented result, he sees and owns the working of that great Being without whom a sparrow falls not to the ground; and if his feeling is one of resignation to the divine will; if he can sincerely say, "He hath done all things well,"—this is patience. Job was an eminent example of patience, when, having lost in one day all his possessions, and (sadder still) all his sons and daughters, he "arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Now, the text tells us that "tribulation worketh patience." It is by trials that this grace is called into exercise. A childlike frame of spirit under chastisement could not be manifested, unless there were chastisements to be

borne. And in giving scope for the exercise of patience they promote that disposition.

This will perhaps be best seen from a familiar illustration. I shall suppose the case of death entering into a family in which no breach has previously been made; and shall endeavour to trace the outline of what is by no means an uncommon experience on the part of Christian parents called to part with a beloved child. A parent, looking with a full, thankful heart upon his little ones, as they rise like olive-plants around his table, and seeing in their faces the flush of health and the promise of long life, may be conscious of no sentiment of unwillingness to submit to the appointments of providence; and yet the elements of unsubmissiveness may be in his soul, needing only a suitable occasion to show themselves in broad manifestation. God sees this, though the individual himself does not; and, at once to reveal and to correct the evil, gives his commission to the King of Terrors. On dark wings the messenger descends. A shadow is within the dwelling where the sunlight of gladness has hitherto been uninterrupted. Every sound of mirth is hushed; every step is soft; every countenance sad and anxious. There is a chamber where an infant sufferer lies, struggling with a fatal disease. All the remedies which affection can suggest prove fruitless. The child grows weaker and weaker, till at last the dreaded stroke falls, and nothing remains to the parents of what they so much loved, except the cold and lifeless clay which they must hasten to bury out of their sight.

Ah! then an evil may be revealed, the existence of which was before unsuspected. There may be hard thoughts in reference to God's procedure. There may be repinings and fretfulness. There may be, not merely the instinctive gush of grief (for that is becoming), but a refusal to be comforted. Reflection and prayer however succeed. The

bereaved father and mother are led, by what has befallen them, to think more than they have been wont to do, of God's right to dispose of them and theirs in the way that he deems best,—to see that right in a clearer aspect,—and to feel it practically in a more perfect manner. Thus out of the soil which the disintegrating influence of affliction has originated, springs a new grace, or at least a grace whose flower had previously lain undeveloped. "Tribulation worketh patience."

Let me pursue this illustration yet a little. Perhaps one such stroke as I have described does not prove sufficient to bring those with whom God is dealing to bow with resignation to his will. What then? In such a case is it not often found that he repeats the blow? He says to the King of Terrors, My purpose is not accomplished; go a second time. And so it befalls. One gem has dropped from the radiant family circle; another in like manner is removed. Is this sufficient? It may be not. A third may be taken away; and thus God may continue to deal with his own people, less in anger than in love, till the end is gained, and, at their own saddened hearth, or beside the grass-covered graves of their once loved and still fondly remembered little ones, they say with hearts truly softened —the last rebellious sentiment subdued, "The will of the Lord be done." Those who have been led in any such path as this, will know what the apostle means when he says, "Tribulation worketh patience."

II. This leads us to consider the second grand step in the argument of our text, which is, "patience worketh experience." The word *experience* means trial or proof. It is a term used in regard to metals; and the idea is, that as gold or some other precious metal is shown to be genuine by a test of acknowledged value, so patience under God's afflictive hand tests a believer's character and proves it

genuine. Uniformly throughout Scripture, as well as here, patience is spoken of as a fruit of the Spirit; one of those fruits which mark the tree on which it grows as containing a principle of heavenly life, and as destined in due time, when removed from earth, to be planted in the paradise above. "We ourselves glory in you in the churches of God," wrote the apostle Paul to the Thessalonians, "for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure; which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer." The explanation of the nature of this grace, given under the previous head, would alone be sufficient to prove that those in whom it appears must be real saints. Implying, as it does, a practical sense on the part of the sufferer of God's authority over him, and a surrender of his dearest inclinations to the will of God, it is something never reached by the unrenewed carnal mind. It can only exist where faith is exercised in the comforting declarations of God's Word,—for it is by looking to these that afflicted saints are enabled to possess their souls in patience;—such declarations as the following: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose;" and, "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby;" and again, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." But faith is a certain mark of a Christian: the patience, therefore, which invariably attends it, and cannot exist apart from it, must be so too. Thus patience works experience:* it tests Christian character. He who is able,

* The apostle James (i. 3) uses an expression which may at first sight appear to reverse the order of our text: "The trying of your faith

while his heart bleeds in its tenderest parts, and his eyes fill with tears which it would be vain (were it wise or right) to attempt repressing; he who is able in such circumstances to banish every sentiment of fretfulness and repining, and to approve of what God has done, has no small or dubious evidence that he is a child of God. We have already referred to the patience of Job when he said, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord;" and we refer to his case again, for the purpose of noticing that this had been the test agreed upon between Jehovah and Satan, whereby the sincerity of the patriarch's religion should be manifested, and that it is accordingly appealed to by Jehovah after his servant had stood the test, as setting his piety beyond a doubt: "And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause."

III. This brings us to the third step in the argument of our text, "Experience worketh hope:" and on the illustration of this it is not necessary to dwell, because it is self-evident that whatever proves one to be a real believer, must strengthen his hope of future blessedness. Should we bear the trials sent upon us in a manner quite at

worketh patience." But there is no real opposition. By *the trying of your faith*, James means *that by which your faith is tried*, viz., persecution. His assertion, therefore, is, that the persecutions by which faith is tried work patience,—an assertion not only not contrary to, but identical with, what is taught in our text. The two apostles agree in saying that tribulation works patience: the only difference (and it is obviously but nominal) is, that while James represents faith as tested by tribulation, Paul represents it as tested by the patience wherewith tribulation is endured.

variance with the injunctions laid upon the people of God, and with the example that saints in every age have set; should we find fault with God's dealings and be guilty of murmuring; this would make it fairly a matter of doubt whether we were Christians, and would necessarily cloud our hopes. But on the other hand, should we, like gold which has stood the ordeal of the furnace, be demonstrated to our own spiritual consciousness, by the way in which we submit to the painful dispensations of divine providence, to be true believers, our hope cannot but be confirmed and increased.

To take up the several links of the argument, then, and to present the whole chain at once, the apostle's statement is to this effect: First, afflictions are instrumental in destroying whatever unsubmissiveness or tendency to rebellious feeling may be in the heart, and in bringing the Christian to a truly resigned frame of spirit: "Tribulation worketh patience." Secondly, patience in its turn tests Christian character, and demonstrates its genuineness: "Patience worketh experience." Thirdly, the establishment of an individual's Christian character fills him with hope; the hope of soon beholding the end of his trials,—the hope of exchanging a world of sin and distress for one where these have no place,—the hope of joining the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, and meeting again with friends in whose society he once rejoiced, but who have fallen asleep in Jesus, and whom he shall see no more on earth,—the hope of being with Christ where he is, sharing his throne, and reigning with him for ever and ever. Now I ask, if this be so, what are afflictions to the Christian but blessings in disguise,—blessings in which (strange as at first the language may appear to unconverted men) he has cause to glory?

"Hear the conclusion of the whole matter." The Gospel does not promise to those who embrace it an exemption

from earthly trials. Quite the reverse. Its language is, "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." Think not, therefore, Christians, if you are called in God's providence to suffer affliction, that any strange thing hath happened unto you. You are but bearing the ordinary lot of believers.

> "The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
> Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."

But the practical lesson of this morning's discourse is, be patient under your trials. Acquiesce cordially in what the Lord does. Be assured that every painful dispensation which he sends, is both meant for your good and fitted to promote your good. "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous. Nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." Endeavour, therefore, to be suitably exercised by your afflictions; acknowledging God's hand in them; and saying, "The will of the Lord be done." Seek that the griefs you feel may, like bitter but salutary medicine, have the effect of rendering your souls more perfectly submissive. Labour and pray that, by developing your graces, and causing them to grow to loftier stature, and to bloom with greater beauty, they may add to the good hope which, as believers, you entertain. But while I thus speak, let it be understood that I address myself exclusively to Christians. Patience, in the scriptural sense of the term, is impossible to unbelievers. They are not in a position to take those views of affliction which alone can lead to patience. They have no unfailing spring to which they can go for consolation in the day of trouble; no spring whose waters well forth exuberant and sweet in proportion as earthly cisterns dry up. They are without any resource whatever under distress. We cannot therefore say to them, "Be resigned, be joyful amidst your tribulations; all things shall work together for your good." But we invite them

to cast in their lot with the people of God, by believing on God's Son. The first step necessary, in order to comfort, whether with reference to spiritual or to common earthly causes of trouble, is to betake yourselves to Christ; as he himself says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." O then, my unconverted friends, come to Christ! Put your trust in him, as you are warranted and invited in the Gospel to do; and then you too shall know the meaning of the prophet's words, "A man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

XV.

GOLD, SILVER, PRECIOUS STONES, AND WOOD, HAY, STUBBLE.

"Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."—1 Cor. iii. 12–15.

A few words will be necessary, by way of preface, to clear the subject to which these verses relate, and to place the conception which was in the apostle's mind distinctly before you. The passage speaks of a foundation, of an edifice reared upon it, and of builders engaged in carrying on the erection; and we must endeavour to take along with us from the commencement a definite understanding of what these figures mean.

There can be no difficulty regarding *the foundation.* We are expressly told that it is Christ. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."—(Ver. 11.)

In the views, however, which they have taken of *the edifice,* interpreters have differed. The correct opinion seems to be, that it represents the church; for the apostle says

in the last clause of the 9th verse, "Ye are God's building." The members of the Corinthian church (not, of course, exclusively, but in connection with the members of other churches throughout the world) formed the building. Under this figure of a building, both the church visible and the church invisible are set forth in Scripture. For example, it is obviously the true church, considered as a building resting upon Christ, to which the apostle Peter refers when he says, "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house." On the other hand, the promiscuous character of the materials composing the edifice spoken of in our text, makes it evident that what is intended here is the church visible —the organised association of those who profess themselves the disciples of Jesus before the world, and not the secret brotherhood that includes none except believers. It may indeed seem to be an objection, that the edifice is built upon Jesus Christ as its foundation. But such language does not by any means imply that the connection of all the parts of the building with Christ is real. The Scriptures, like other writings, often describe things as they appear, rather than as they really are. Just as our Lord, in the parable of the vine, speaks of branches in him which bear no fruit,—meaning barren professors, nominally connected with him,—so the visible church may be said to be built upon Christ, as all belonging to it rest nominally upon him.

With regard, once more, to *the builders;* they are ministers of the Gospel; for Paul, ver. 10, speaks of himself as one builder, and of Apollos, by whom he had been followed at Corinth, as another. "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon." It is no doubt the duty of all who have experienced the grace of God, even of private Christians, to do what in

them lies in their respective spheres, for advancing the Redeemer's cause and building up his church in the world. But this is the special and proper function of ministers. They are "separated unto the gospel of God." They are the servants whom the King sends out into the highways and hedges, to acquaint such as they may find, "that all things are ready," and to "compel them to come in." They are "ambassadors for Christ," formally commissioned "to pray men in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God."

Gathering up what has been said, the general conception in the apostle's mind will appear to be this:—By his labours at Corinth a church had been formed, composed of persons professing themselves disciples of Jesus. He likens this church, in his imagination, to an edifice, having Christ for its foundation; and he pictures to himself other ministers, like so many builders, busily engaged in the enlargement of the edifice, adding new materials to those already laid upon it, collecting additional members into the Christian society.

If this general conception be apprehended, we are prepared to take up and consider the particular views set forth in the text; which, as they are of vast moment, both to Christian ministers and to those who wait upon their ministrations, will, I trust, be duly weighed by all of us. They are as follows:—*First*, the materials entering into the composition of the visible church, vary with the builders by whom the work is carried on; some church members being worthless, as wood, hay, stubble; others excellent, as gold, silver, precious stones. *Secondly*, the work of each builder engaged in rearing up the fabric of the visible church shall be tested, tried by fire: the members of the church shall be made to undergo an ordeal by which those who are not true Christians shall be distinguished and separated from those who are. And *finally*, it shall not be an indifferent thing to a particular builder whether the mate-

rials which have been added to the church by his instrumentality stand the test or fail under it; but he shall be recompensed or otherwise, according as the former or the latter result takes place.

I. First then, *the materials entering into the composition of the visible church, vary with the builders by whom the work is carried on; some church members being worthless, as wood, hay, stubble; and others excellent, as gold, silver, precious stones.*

The truth that an outward connection with the church, determines nothing as to a person's spiritual state,—that such connection may exist where the heart is unrenewed, as well as where the influence of the Spirit has been savingly exerted,—is frequently and in the most various modes urged in Scripture upon the notice of professing Christians; not as though there were any possibility of its being doubted, but because it is so essential that it should be laid to heart. Individuals not unfrequently derive a sort of comfort from the fact that they are members of a church, regular in waiting upon church ordinances, and not chargeable with any acts so decidedly sinful as to subject them to church censure. Their position in this respect unconsciously leads them to say, "peace, peace," to their souls, where, if the matter were thoroughly inquired into, it would be found that they were deceiving themselves. Let us, therefore, bear constantly in mind, that "they are not all Israel which are of Israel;" but that in the purest church on earth, worthless characters, hypocrites, formalists, and essentially ungodly persons, are conjoined with the saints of God.

Our text connects the composition of a church, in the respect to which I allude,—the prevalence of piety or the reverse, among its members,—with the manner in which the ministers of Christ discharge their office. They are

the builders; and the work of *this* builder proves wood, hay, stubble; of *that*, gold, silver, precious stones.

Now, in considering this difference, you will remark that it is taken for granted, in the case of both classes of ministers, that Christ is preached. The former, as well as the latter, builds upon Christ. For, one would not be a Christian minister at all,—he would not deserve the name or have any pretensions to it,—if Christ, as the great atoning sacrifice for sin, and the source of sanctifying grace, were not the central theme of his teaching. An old and pious servant of the Lord, being once asked his opinion of a volume of discourses, answered, "They contain much that is true, and are beautifully written, but THE NAME OF JESUS IS NOT THERE." A minister whose instructions should be of this kind, marked by a total or general omission of the name of Jesus, by a denial, or tacit ignoring of the doctrine that "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son," could not be said to be labouring for the extension even of the visible church. He might display in his discourses the imagination of a Plato, and give them forth with the elocution of a Cicero; he might treat of natural virtue with the utmost propriety, but he would not be doing, or professing to do, the part of a Christian minister. Such a case the apostle does not contemplate in the passage before us. He supposes that all to whom he refers build upon the foundation,—"preach Christ and him crucified."

But here is the point. Even where Christ is preached, the ministry may be such as to result in very little spiritual good to those who wait upon it. The preaching may be so vague and indefinite as neither to touch the conscience nor to attract the heart. Or, while the fundamental doctrine of salvation through Christ is not overlooked, serious error may be mingled with the truth, by means of which the latter is obscured. Or, a minister may be so

careless in his preparations, that he is seldom able, when he appears before his people and rises to declare to them the "counsel of God," to do it in a suitable way; or, he may be guilty of acts of imprudence or of improprieties of conduct which may hinder his doctrine from being favourably received. The result, upon the whole, may be, that there will be little genuine and living religion among the flock of his charge. On the other hand, there are ministers who preach the Gospel in all its fulness,—preach it with no admixture of error, or with no more than is the almost necessary result of human imperfection,—preach it with earnestness and affection, giving forth its streams warm from their own hearts; and while preaching it with their lips, recommend it by their daily and hourly example. Such was Paul, who, in the review of his labours, could say to those over whom he had been placed, "I have kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." Ministers of this class will, for the most part, be savingly useful in the church.

In these remarks, no absolute law is intended to be expressed. The Spirit of God, the only efficient cause in the conversion of sinners and in the edification of saints, may work saving results by the most unlikely instrumentality; and, on the contrary, the best labours may remain unproductive. But, as a general rule, a correspondence exists between the ministry and the results produced. Given an inefficient minister, and his labours may be expected to be useless, or all but so: his work will be wood, hay, stubble. Given a good, an earnest, a faithful minister, and he will seldom fail, by the blessing of God, to accomplish, in some degree, the ends for which the ministry has been established: his work will be gold, silver, precious stones.

II. But this brings me to the consideration of the second great idea of the text, namely, that *the work of each builder engaged in rearing up the fabric of the visible church is to be tested.* "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it; because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

I do not suppose that these words refer exclusively to any particular mode by which the work of a Christian minister is to be made manifest, nor to any particular day in which its character shall be declared. I interpret them in the most general manner, as teaching that the members of the visible church shall be subjected to an ordeal whereby those who are not true Christians shall be distinguished and separated from those who are; and I consider them as including every kind of ordeal by which this end is gained. The comparison of fire indicates the decisive nature of the ordeal. In the arts, when an important piece of mechanism has been constructed—the bayonet, for example, which a soldier is to carry on the field of battle; or the boiler of a steam-engine on which the lives of hundreds of travellers may depend,—it is subjected, before being used, to a critical process that infallibly discovers if there be a flaw in it. The fire referred to in our text, is just the symbol of some such critical process brought to bear upon members of the church.

I may illustrate this by referring to the persecutions which the early Christians, whom the apostle was immediately addressing in our text, were frequently called to endure. In seasons of outward peace, unconverted persons, from various motives, assumed the name of disciples, professed to believe in Jesus, and conformed themselves to the ordinances of his house; and none perhaps, so long as the church continued to have rest, doubted their discipleship. But "when the sun was up, they were

scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away." As soon as a profession of Christianity was attended with danger or serious loss; as soon as the alternative came to be, renounce connection with the people of Christ, or be spoiled of your goods,—deny Christ, or be thrown into a dungeon,—abjure Christ, or embrace the stake, they were "made manifest;" "the day declared them;" the fiery trial demonstrated "of what sort" their profession was.

Or take an illustration from what is matter of daily observation to ourselves. A youth, living under the eye of pious parents, and in a neighbourhood where religion is respected, maintains for a while what seems a consistent profession of godliness; is a church member, a Sabbath-school teacher, an attendant upon prayer meetings, and the like. But he leaves his father's home for some remote country. No eye which he regards is any longer observing him. He is a stranger among strangers. He knows that there are none around to contrast a present casting off of the fear of the Lord, with what he was previously. The change of locality has removed former restraints, and though the simple removal of outward restraint may not seem a very fiery trial, it may, alas! be enough,—enough to demonstrate the worthlessness of the profession which the individual made, and to prove that he possessed no vital union to Christ.

A striking example of a test successfully applied by our Lord in the course of his personal ministry, so as to make manifest an individual of great spiritual promise, and to declare him of what sort he was, is given by the Evangelists. I quote the narrative of Mark. "And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is,

God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions."

In opposition to all such instances, true believers never fail, whatever tests they are subjected to. The fires that consume the wood, hay, and stubble, and separate from the church the worthless materials by which its fabric was weakened and defaced, leave the gold, and silver, and precious stones unremoved and free from injury, shining only with a brighter lustre in consequence of the trial they have undergone. In all circumstances "the foundation of God," as we read in the Second Epistle to Timothy, "standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his; and, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." Of what unmatched sublimity are the words of Paul, referring to this subject, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.) Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

I have spoken of ordeals to which the church is subjected

here. These, however, are neither so perfect, nor do they operate so universally, as infallibly to distinguish true Christians from mere nominal professors in this world. In many states of society, of which our own may be cited as an instance, tests of a critical kind, and at the same time of wide and marked effect, are rarely brought to bear upon the church. But there is a future day which shall make every church member manifest,—that day when "the Son of man shall sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." Then at last, if not at an earlier time, professors shall be revealed of what sort they are; the revealing fire being the fire of the omniscient penetration of the Judge, preceding his righteous and terrible condemnation of the ungodly, and his open acquittal and acceptance of the righteous.

III. The last great point set forth in the text is, that *it shall not be an indifferent thing to a builder, whether the materials that have been added to the church through his instrumentality stand the test, or fail under it.* Ver. 14, 15, "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."

First, The Christian minister whose labours in the Gospel have been such as to issue in permanently good results,—who, employed on the edifice of the visible church, does work which abides,—shall receive a reward. While the Bible knows nothing of reward on the score of merit, it teaches that a reward shall be bestowed upon the people of God, of grace: and as there is no office so intimately connected with the glory of God, and the best interests of mankind, as the office of the ministry; so there is no class

of persons who are warranted in expecting a more abundant recompense at the hand of the great Head of the Church, than ministers who discharge the duties of their office as they ought,—discharge them in a manner fitted to command success,—in *the* manner which in fact does actually, as a general rule, lead to success. I have referred to the apostle Paul as an example of a minister exercising his vocation aright: let me now refer to him as an example of the way in which such a minister is entitled to anticipate his recompense. Paul was a prisoner at Rome, in the grasp of a tyrant as bloodthirsty as the world ever saw. Listen to his words addressed in these circumstances to his beloved son Timothy. "I am now ready to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

But turning next to the reverse side of the case: Christian ministers, whose labours have not been such as to issue in permanently good results,—whose work is burnt in the day of trial,—they, we are told, shall suffer loss. They shall miss the recompense which better ministers of the New Testament obtain. The weakness and corruption which occasioned their want of success, shall be the lessening of their honour and felicity. They may be likened to a general, who, having acted a culpably inefficient part, and having failed during the campaigns which he conducted to improve opportunities of success which were afforded to him, returns home to think with bitter regret upon his faults, and to envy the laurels that have been earned by his more deserving fellows. Yes, they shall suffer loss! With what a sense of loss shall the faulty minister be impressed in beholding others who have approved themselves

faithful, shining "as the brightness of the firmament," while he himself is without any such glory, though it might have been his too; and in hearing them hailed with expressions of overflowing thankfulness by multitudes whom they have been instrumental in saving, while none or few ever approach to greet *him* in similar terms! How sad will be his sense of loss, when he considers that heaven might have been fuller, and the company of the redeemed more numerous, had he done his duty on earth!

In these remarks I have supposed the faulty minister to be himself a Christian. That the apostle is contemplating such a case, is obvious from the concluding words of our text, "But he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." It is sad that a minister of Christ, himself a Christian, should still be so far under the power of worldly principles, that souls perish in consequence of his neglect. But so it may be. Such a person, being a Christian, shall be saved; but, if I may so express myself, that will be all. His will be a hairbreadth escape. It will be "so as by fire;" the comparison being taken from a burning house, and from the circumstances of one caught in the midst of it, who, with the blazing rafters falling around him, succeeds, but only with the greatest difficulty, in making his way to a position of safety; his singed hair and garments telling, even after he is out, how terrible was the risk he ran.

There is much in what we have been considering that is fitted to be practically useful to various classes of persons.

1. *Our text conveys a solemn lesson to church members,* teaching, as it does so clearly, that an individual may be a professing Christian, and yet be none of Christ's,—may temporarily, or even to the close of his life on earth, occupy a place in the visible church, and yet be rejected from "the general assembly and church of the first-born" in heaven. An immense amount of self-deception, as previously remarked, prevails among professors of religion.

Multitudes of this class, who have no vital union to Christ, and are utterly devoid of the holiness which belongs to Christ's genuine disciples, indulge nevertheless a habitual comfortable feeling, as if it were well with their souls—the only ground of which appears to lie in the fact, that they make a profession of religion, and are free from what is grossly wicked in practice. But what cause of security does this afford? The question is not, Are we church members? but, Do we belong to that division of church members represented by the "gold, silver, precious stones?" or to that represented by the "wood, hay, stubble?"

I am anxious, my friends, that your eyes should be fully opened to the unwarrantableness of the tacit assumption which is so frequently made, that a profession of Christianity, if attended with ordinary decency of conduct, is a sort of guarantee that every thing is right. Most miserable delusion! Nothing is more certain than that we may be fair and flourishing professors, well acquainted with Bible truth, regular in our attendance upon divine ordinances, and of blameless outward deportment, while we are still on the broad way that leads to destruction. "Not every one," are the words of Jesus himself, "that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works; and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Let those of us, therefore, who are professors of religion see well to the character of our profession. Let us take heed that we are not deceiving ourselves, and resting content with a name to live while we are dead. Let us not indulge the belief that it is well with our souls, unless we have thoroughly looked into the foundation of our secu-

rity, and have seen reason to hope, after faithful and conscientious and prayerful examination, that we have, indeed, been led to close with Christ as our Saviour, and have experienced the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost shed on us abundantly through him. It is irrational for a man to be at ease in regard to his eternal interests, till he has gone to the bottom of the matter, and obtained assurance, at least as far as possible, that his confidence is warranted. Suppose that we are making a mistake, how awful will the consequences be! If any of us who are are now saying to ourselves, "Peace, peace," should hereafter lift up our eyes in hell, being in torments, with what self-reproach will we bewail our unaccountable folly in resting upon a profession of Christianity and upon a blameless deportment, and imagining ourselves to be in a good way, without ever having in earnest made trial of our saving interest in Christ! Many, now lying under condemnation, were once as fair and as well instructed and credible professors as any of us are, and had as little suspicion that their souls should be lost as any of us have; yet now they dwell in devouring fire, with the devil and his angels. Wisdom, therefore, suggests to each of us the propriety of considering,—Is it possible that I can be no more than a mere nominal professor as they were? Is it possible that I may be at ease in Zion, without any good cause, as they were? Is it possible, that like them, I may be drifting towards the gulf of everlasting death, and yet be supposing that my course shall terminate happily? "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"

2. From the subject that has been considered, we may learn *how little the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is affected by cases of apostasy occurring among professing Christians.* The doctrine of the perseverance

of the saints is so indispensable to a believer's comfort, while it is peculiarly favourable to his growth in holiness, that it is not easy to understand how any pious persons have ever been able to reconcile themselves to the rejection of it. Can those who have been really apprehended by Christ and made members of his kingdom, be separated from him, and perish? Some actually answer in the affirmative, and they point to illustrative examples—examples of alleged saints who have lapsed into unbelief, and have cast their former profession behind their backs. But does not our text suggest the true explanation of all such cases? The "wood, hay, stubble," may be separated from the visible church, but the "gold, silver, and precious stones," are work which abides. The apostasy of a professor is not the falling away of a genuine Christian, but the manifestation of one who never was a Christian. The temptation that led to his apostasy did not change his real character, but only declared him of what sort he was. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

3. Again, *the text shows the excellence and honour, and at the same time the great responsibility, of the ministerial office.* Its excellence and honour. Were I disposed to magnify mine office, I could not do it too highly. No one who gives himself to the work of the ministry could choose an employment either of equal essential dignity,—for the Christian minister is the ambassador of Christ; or one which, well performed, will yield larger fruit to himself,—for "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." But its responsibility is vast in a corresponding degree. On the way in

which a minister performs his part, the salvation or the loss of souls whose value is beyond reckoning, humanly speaking, depends. The ministerial office, therefore, should be earnestly coveted: "This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." But wherever that office is undertaken, it should be entered upon with fear and trembling, with great searching of heart, with a profound sense of one's own insufficiency, and humble reliance on the almighty grace of God.

4. *To a minister whose term of labour as pastor of a particular charge may be drawing to a close, the subject this day expounded has a peculiarly weighty and affecting reference.** It leads him to review his past ministry, and to consider what its character and effects have been. It leads him to think of his shortcomings in the work; of the comparative coldness of his zeal for the salvation of the people among whom he has preached the Word of God; of the feebleness of all the efforts he has put forth; of the opportunities of usefulness he has missed; of injury,—perhaps irreparable injury,—which may have befallen some through his remissness. In the view of this, the dark side of the case (and who is there to whom the case has not a dark side?), penitent confession of past sin and failure becomes his duty, joined with a renewed and more entire devotion of himself to the service of God for time to come, and with earnest prayer that the seed which he has sown in that part of the vineyard where his labours have been expended, and much of which may meanwhile seem to have been sown in vain, may yet spring up, and, through the divine blessing, yield an abundant re-

* This Sermon was preached on the first Sabbath after the author had resolved to accept the appointment of Theological Professor in Knox's College, to which he had been nominated by a Committee of Synod, and when it was generally known throughout the congregation that he had formed this resolution.

turn. On the other hand, he would be acting wrong if, in making such a review of his ministry, he should fail to acknowledge with thankfulness any indications of good done through his instrumentality,—any tokens of success following his imperfect efforts.

I have now, my friends, been your minister for above two years and a-half, and—as most of you are already aware—there is a proposal to remove me to a different sphere of labour. In these circumstances, though the matter is not yet decided, and though I may therefore seem, in alluding to it, to be anticipating what may never take place, I cannot but think of the text in its bearing upon myself, and upon you, as connected with me. None can be more deeply conscious than I am of the imperfections with which my ministry has been marked; yet I am not willing to think that it has been in vain in the Lord. And one thing I can most truly say (as Paul said of his countrymen according to the flesh), "My heart's desire and prayer to God" for the members of this congregation is—has been and is—"that they might be saved." I persuade myself that not a few "among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God" are already in a state of salvation. *Them* "may the God of all grace, by whom they have been called unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, make perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle!" *Others*, who may be still unconverted, I would earnestly implore to remember the exhibitions I have endeavoured to make to them in time past, of the way of salvation, summed up in the sentence, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" and I would urge upon them the duty of coming to a decision in regard to the things that belong to their peace, and closing with Christ while opportunity is still afforded them; that whether our connection as pastor and people be soon

brought to a close, or continue for a longer time, we may be a joy and a crown of rejoicing to one another throughout eternity. I wish, if God enable me to finish my course with joy, to meet in a better world, not some, not a few, but all on whose faces I have been accustomed here to look from Sabbath to Sabbath.

XVI.

THE GOSPEL JUDGED TO BE WISDOM BY THEM THAT ARE PERFECT.

"Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect."—1 Cor. ii. 6.

In that part of the Epistle to the Corinthians from which our text is taken, the apostle is animadverting upon the course pursued by some professedly Christian teachers, who obscured the Gospel by seeking to accommodate themselves to prevalent systems of philosophy. Corinth was noted, among other things, for learning and intellectual refinement; and the parties in question, having reference to the taste and spirit of the Grecian schools, had in their public ministrations departed from the simplicity of the faith,—mingling their own vain speculations with the message which, as ambassadors of Christ, they ought to have delivered unadulterated,—announcing the doctrines of inspiration, less as divine mysteries,* than as

* The word *mystery*, as applied to the doctrines of Scripture, denotes not their incomprehensibility, but their distinctive character as truths of revelation. A mystery is not an incomprehensible announcement, but a revealed truth,—a truth with which we could not have become acquainted except by divine revelation. The sentence, "Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh," does not mean that the doctrine of God manifest in the flesh is very mysterious, but that it is a great, a grand, an all-important truth of revelation. In like manner, in the verse

conclusions which the human understanding might reach of itself—and thus going far to degrade the vast and sublime discoveries of the Gospel (which, until they were supernaturally divulged, eye never saw, nor ear heard, nor mind of man imagined) to the level of a branch of common earthly science. In following this course they were influenced chiefly, it is to be feared, by a desire of the praise of men, and by a dread of the contempt of the philosophers by whom they were surrounded, to whom the Gospel in its native, unsophisticated form,—given out as a mystery, capable of being known only by revelation,—was "foolishness;" an absurd, undemonstrated, irrational system.

The error which they thus committed, being of the most pernicious kind, was sharply reproved by the apostle Paul. Admitting, as he distinctly did, that the Gospel, when set forth plainly, without having any of its peculiarities kept back, or explained away, or softened, was likely to prove repulsive to the human mind, he still demanded that it should be preached just as it is; since, when thus preached, it is an appropriate and effective instrument,—the only appropriate and effective instrument,—God's instrument, for saving sinners: "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." "The Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, ... unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called .... the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." This last clause is very striking, where he even seems to grant the Gospel to be foolishness, calling it "the foolishness of God"—language

following our text, the phrase, "The wisdom of God in a mystery," does not mean the incomprehensible doctrine of the Gospel, but the supernaturally revealed doctrine of the Gospel.

expressing, in the strongest conceivable manner, his uncompromising adherence to the doctrine of the cross (however irrational any parties, deemed wise, might esteem it), and his utter indifference to whatever reproaches of absurdity or the like, the so-called wise of this world might be pleased to cast upon that doctrine.

To give force to his reproof, he alludes to his own preaching, and reminds the Corinthians what it had been. "And I, brethren," he writes with no small pathos, "when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God: for I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." Then, finally, lest his adoption of the term "foolishness," in speaking of the Gospel, should be misunderstood, he enters the caveat you find in our text, "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect." As if he had said, Though I have called the Gospel the foolishness of God, and have thus seemed to concede the case to the enemies of the Gospel when they bring the charge of foolishness against it, it is not foolishness in reality. It is wisdom; philosophy in the highest sense. It may not appear in this light to all: but it will be thus regarded by those who are capable of forming a due estimate, by those who are perfect, who possess (that is) the faculty requisite for appreciating the matter.

Our text, the connection of which I have thus explained, involves two main propositions. The *first* is, that a certain peculiar state of mind and heart, a peculiar faculty, or whatever you may choose to name it, is necessary in order to our judging of the Gospel. Its claims can be properly

weighed only by "them that are perfect." The *second* is, that though others may consider the Gospel to be foolishness, those who have the faculty of estimating it aright see that it is wisdom,—true, divine philosophy. On these two points in their order, I propose, in the sequel of the discourse, humbly relying upon Him whose grace alone can enable us to speak or to hear profitably, to offer some remarks.

I. The first proposition involved in the text is, that in order to judge of the Gospel, men must be PERFECT; not perfect, of course, in the sense of having attained to absolute holiness of character, because none are thus perfect,—"There is not a just man upon the earth that doeth good, and sinneth not,"—but perfect, as possessing the faculty that judges of spiritual things,—a faculty not found in a large class, who therefore may be described as spiritually imperfect.

The word used by our translators does not, perhaps, convey the idea of the original as distinctly as might be wished, yet I do not know another that is preferable. The original expresses strictly the opposite of defect. Whatever is defective in any of its parts is imperfect, and conversely. But an illustration or two will best explain what is meant.

Our first example shall be taken from the human body. An individual may be corporeally imperfect, by being destitute of any of his bodily organs; by wanting, for instance, the sense of sight. A blind man is imperfect, in respect of the power of vision; and in consequence, he is disqualified from forming a proper judgment,—indeed, from judging at all,—about the matters of which the missing sense takes cognizance. His opinion may be valuable on many other points, but of questions of sight he knows nothing; and even when information respecting visible things is

communicated to him by those who are not blind, there will be much in what falls from them to which he will not be able to assent with any comprehension of its meaning. You may discourse as eloquently to him as you please about the variegated beauty of the earth, the aspect of the boundless ocean, and the brilliant glories of the sky; it is in vain. Your perceptions, and the emotions which they awaken in your breast, remain a mystery to him. The variegated earth, the boundless ocean, and the glorious brilliant sky, exist as visible phenomena to you who are perfect in respect of the bodily organization that discovers them; but they exist not thus to him in consequence of his imperfection; and the words in which you describe such things, fall upon his ears as the utterances of an unknown tongue.

A second illustration may be taken from the department of taste in the fine arts. We shall specify the subject of painting. Some persons are born without the slightest taste for the creations of the pencil. In this particular of their mental conformation they are imperfect, and are thereby incapacitated for judging on points of artistic merit. They stand before one of Raphael's cartoons,—the one, suppose, in which the greatest of painters has represented Paul as striking Elymas with blindness; while the sorcerer, as the sudden film comes upon him, stretches out his hands in groping helplessness,—and they see nothing or little in it different from those miserable daubs which hang upon the walls of a roadside tavern. Another individual, gifted with exquisite taste and sensibility in matters of art, comes up. They perceive emotions of admiration depicted on his countenance, and they ask him to describe wherein the excellence of the piece consists. Let him now attempt to do this. Will he succeed in imparting his perceptions to them, or in awakening in their breasts the feelings which he himself experiences? As-

suredly no, because they want the faculty to judge of such things.

I shall give yet one illustration more from the department of ordinary morals. You can imagine a person, not indeed without a conscience, but with his conscience so perverted from various causes, that it is impossible for him in that state to see the viciousness or impropriety of actions which to another person, in an ordinary state of moral feeling, are self-evidently wrong. Such a case furnishes an example very analogous to those already adduced, of one class of men possessing a certain capacity wanting in another class, the former being (in respect of the possession of that capacity) perfect, as contrasted with the latter, who are imperfect; and the consequence of this difference being that judgments in the branch of knowledge of which the faculty in question takes cognizance, can be formed by the former, perfectly valid,—valid in themselves, and felt to be so by him who forms them, though their validity is not apparent to, nor even comprehensible by the latter.

Now, mark the purpose for which I have adduced these examples. I consider them to cast a strong and important light upon the many passages in the Word of God, of which the text is one, which tell us that, in order to judge of the subject-matter of the Gospel,—whether it be true or false, excellent or unworthy of attention,—a peculiar preparation of mind and heart, a peculiar faculty, or whatever it may be termed, is requisite. One man, on hearing the doctrine of the cross announced, at once exclaims, "That is all absurdity, it is foolishness!" He thinks it unnecessary to inquire what external evidences of its divine origin exist. Its internal character is to him sufficient to justify his immediate rejection of it. Another, who has not any more than the first examined the external evidences of Christianity, finds in the Gospel, on the contrary, characters which irresistibly impress him as furnishing a proof of

its divinity. The Gospel is to him its own best witness. His consciousness feels it to be "the wisdom of God, and the power of God." Whence do these contradictory estimates arise? Whence but from an opposite spiritual condition of the persons judging? With reference to the matter in hand, the former is imperfect. His spiritual discernment is so clouded by the sin of his nature, that he is not qualified to judge about the Gospel; as our Saviour said to the Jews, "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" The latter is perfect. He, renewed by the Spirit of God, and purged in some measure from the influence of sinful prejudice, is capable of estimating the Gospel; according to the words of the apostle John, "Ye" (believers) "have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." "The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you; and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." You will find these two classes of persons most exactly distinguished in the fourteenth and fifteenth verses of the chapter before us. "THE NATURAL MAN" (*imperfect*) "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But HE THAT IS SPIRITUAL" (*perfect*) "judgeth all things, yet" (it is added) "he himself is judged of no man;" *i. e.*, others may call him irrational for forming such a judgment as he does, but be it so; their estimate goes for nothing; "he is judged of no man."

The doctrine which I am expounding, that one class of men—regenerate persons—are capable of apprehensions in divine things, which another class—unregenerate persons—are incapable of, has not escaped the charge of "foolishness" that has fallen upon other parts of the Christian sys-

tem. In particular, it has been set down as unintelligible mysticism, but it can afford to bear the reproach. That it is taught by the apostle in the chapter before us, is, I conceive, beyond fair dispute; and I trust that the manner in which I have illustrated the apostle's statement will assist you in perceiving that there is not any thing in it repugnant to sober reason, or deserving to be called mystical, in an opprobrious sense. If, indeed, mysticism be a name applied to all cases in which it is claimed that one person may have apprehensions inappreciable or incomprehensible by another, we must, according to such a definition, grant our doctrine to be mystical. But what then? Is it therefore untrue, or absurd? Then it will be absurd also for men who enjoy the blessing of sight to talk of their visual perceptions and the emotions attending these, because all this is incomprehensible to the blind. Then it will be absurd for the admirers of a Raphael to talk of their appreciation of his consummate excellence as a painter, because this is incomprehensible to such as are devoid of taste and sensibility in regard to painting. Then, in a word, (to take the example most closely analogous to the one in hand), it will be absurd for men in an ordinary moral state to talk of their intuitive judgment that a particular action is vicious and detestable, because this is incomprehensible to one whose conscience has become blunted and dead, and who, for his part, sees no harm in the action.

I will make only one other remark on this part of my subject; and it is, that as the perfection spoken of in the text, the capacity for judging of spiritual things, depends not upon one's natural intellectual gifts, but upon his being enlightened by the Spirit of God, persons of very ordinary mental powers may discern, and justifiably feel satisfied of the truth of that Gospel which men of lofty and commanding mind despise. Most of you are familiar with the contrast which the poet Cowper draws betwixt that splendid

but miserable genius, Voltaire, and an obscure, illiterate Christian cottager. After referring to the Frenchman's infidelity, he gives the opposite picture :—

> " Yon cottager who weaves at her own door,
> Pillow and bobbins all her little store;
> Content though mean, and cheerful if not gay,
> Shuffling her threads about the livelong day;
> Just earns a scanty pittance, and at night
> Lies down secure, her heart and pocket light:
> She for her humble sphere by nature fit,
> Has little understanding and no wit;
> Receives no praise; but though her lot be such,
> (Toilsome and indigent) she renders much.
> Just knows, and knows no more, her Bible true—
> A truth the brilliant Frenchman never knew;
> And in that charter reads with sparkling eyes,
> Her title to a treasure in the skies."

Now it has been urged as a reproach against Christianity, that the contrast here drawn is a pretty faithful representation of the case in general. As it was asked in the days of our Saviour, " Which of the rulers have believed on him?" so it has often been said since, that Christianity is accepted by the ordinary crowd, but rejected by persons of the highest talents. Of course you are aware that there are multitudes of exceptions to this. There have been thousands of instances of men, of whom intellectually the earth was proud, who, after patient investigation, consented to the truth of Christianity, and yielded their hearts to its influence. Still the fact alleged may be conceded to be to a certain extent correct. It seems to have been even more generally correct in primitive times than it is now. " Ye see your calling, brethren," we read at the 26th verse of the first chapter of this Epistle, " how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; . . . . and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

that no flesh should glory in his presence." This being so, it is of consequence to observe that the perfection which qualifies a person for judging of spiritual things is something altogether distinct from intellectual ability in the ordinary sense. Far be it from me to undervalue intellectual gifts or attainments, even considered as conducive to the formation of proper views of divine truth. But what I say is, that one does not need to possess extraordinary mental powers, in order to his having both a clear understanding and a firm, well-based belief of the record of the Gospel—the glorious record that "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." A man of very humble mind may have such an understanding and belief, when the princes of the intellectual world are fatally astray. It is not the largest planets that are nearest the sun, nor the greatest men, as the world counts greatness, that are closest to the orb of divine truth. A simple woman, like the cottager of whom we made mention, may see and know that the Gospel is from God; may appreciate its wisdom; and may be justified, on the most certain of all kinds of evidence, in holding to its announcements, and "grappling them to her soul with hooks of steel;" while the Voltaire of a past century could do nothing but expend the light artillery of his wit in sneering at them; and the Carlyle of a present can but denounce them as unbelievabilities.

II. Without extending my observations on this head, I proceed to the second main proposition of the text, which is, that those who possess the faculty of estimating the Gospel see that it is WISDOM: "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect." A very wide and extensive door for remark is here opened, but I must restrict myself to the illustration of a few leading points, and it will suffice to notice the following: *first*, the exhibition given by the Gospel of the character of God; *secondly*, its recognition

of the wants of man, with its adaptation to meet these; and, *finally*, its practical power, as experienced by believers, in accomplishing the objects it professes to serve. In these respects, among others, it will be felt by those who are perfect, that in proclaiming the doctrine of the cross, deemed by many foolishness, we speak wisdom.

1. My first particular is, that the Gospel commends itself as wisdom to them that are perfect *by the exhibition which it gives of the character of God.* Passing by what the Gospel teaches of the divine character in other respects, I would fix attention on the simple circumstance, that it represents God as combining ineffable mercy with absolute judicial rectitude. Ineffable mercy: for to mercy as a spring deep in the divine breast, the Gospel traces the whole stream of redemption. "God SO LOVED THE WORLD,"—love originated the plan,—"that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Absolute judicial rectitude: for mercy, the Gospel assumes, cannot be exercised to the diminution of justice. These attributes must be harmonised. That they may be harmonised, and that God may be just while justifying the ungodly, he sends his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and appoints him,—his well-beloved,—to die as a sacrifice for sin in the room of the guilty. "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." "All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." This is the Gospel: and in it an exhibition of the divine character is given, which alone, of all the exhibitions of the divine character that ever have been given, commends itself to a spiritually enlightened mind. Persons on whose understandings the blinding influence of the god of this world lies, may, perhaps, deny that there is any thing in what has been adduced, except what deserves

the name of foolishness. But we appeal to "them that are perfect." One who is perfect will certainly form a different judgment; and the more perfect that he becomes, he will be the more satisfied that the representation of Jehovah afforded by the Christian system, is worthy of the Most High. Here, he will say, is a representation of God, to the correctness of which my nature, in all its principles, accords. In other systems than that of the Gospel, I find the mercy of God degraded into mere leniency; the weakness which, hesitating to punish where punishment is due, will rather see law outraged, and sin committed with impunity, than permit merited wrath to descend upon the heads of transgressors. On the same theories, I find the justice of God suffering still more grievously. I find it virtually annihilated, by being represented as relaxing its claims, and setting the guilty free, while yet nothing has been done in the way of satisfaction for their offences. Can the attributes of the eternal God, the qualities on which Jehovah's claim to the homage of his creatures rests, be of this description? I cannot believe it. But the representation which the Gospel gives me of God, evidences itself to my mind with irresistible power. Here is compassion, reaching above the clouds,—tenderness, infinite in measure, without the slightest affinity to weakness. Here is at the same time justice without any flaw, admitting no compromise of its claims. Here God's hatred of iniquity and his inflexible determination to punish it, are stamped upon the very deed in which his gift of reconciliation is conveyed to sinners. They constitute the very assumption on which the whole scheme of reconciliation proceeds. Here "grace,"—O how rich! O how vast!—"reigns;" yet reigns not at the expense of righteousness; but reigns "through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." Is this an irrational, can it be a false, system of doctrine? Must it not be the very truth of God?

2. But, in the second place, the Gospel commends itself as wisdom to them that are perfect, *by its recognition of the wants of man, and its adaptation to meet these.*

Many have a most mistaken idea of the redemption which a sinner needs. They think of him as requiring to be pardoned,—freed from condemnation,—and nothing more. Alas! this would be a poor redemption. Guilty man undoubtedly needs to be pardoned; but in order that he may be saved, he must be sanctified too. Should his heart continue unholy, he could not, from the very nature of the case, dwell with God, enjoy God, or be happy. Now the Gospel recognises our necessities in their full extent. It comes to us as a scheme having for its object, not merely the removal of the sentence of condemnation to which our transgressions have exposed us, but also, what every reflective and spiritually earnest man must feel to be the grand matter in salvation,—the restoration of the lost image of God to our souls. Without this, the removal of a sentence of condemnation would be a mere nominal boon.

To meet the necessities which it thus recognises, the Gospel, in the first place, announces pardon,—a free and ample pardon, based (as has been noticed under the former particular) upon the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. By teaching the true humanity along with the supreme divinity of Jesus, it shows how, on the one hand, he could die as a sacrifice for sin, and how, on the other, his sacrifice has such value as to be available for the millions who are invited to rest upon him. "There is one Mediator between God and men, THE MAN Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all." "The blood of Jesus Christ, GOD'S SON, cleanseth us from all sin." With reference, secondly, to the renewal and sanctification of our natures, the Gospel both provides in the Holy Spirit an agent adequate to the work of regeneration, and is, in

its own subject-matter, most suitable to be the instrument, in the hand of the Spirit, of our moral renovation. If men are to be made holy, in a manner consistent with their rational natures,* motives having a natural tendency to make them holy must be brought to bear upon them. And the wisdom of a particular mode of dispensing pardon (supposing more modes than one possible) will be measured by the degree in which the manner of conveying the deed of remission is intrinsically fitted to make the pardoned sinner feel how evil and bitter a thing sin is, and to produce in his soul earnest and permanent desires after complete emancipation from its influence. Now, need I remind you in how unexampled and marvellous a way the Gospel falls in with this view? For "the sacrifice of Christ," as one has well put the case, "has associated sin with the blood of a Benefactor, as well as with our own personal sufferings, and has connected obedience with the dying entreaty of a Friend breathing out a tortured life for us, as well as with our own unceasing glory in his blessed society."† Had men been pardoned and reconciled to God without any atonement being made for their offences,—allowing for a moment that this was possible,—how feeble an impression of the loathsomeness of sin and of the purity of the divine nature would have been left upon their minds! Sin would neither, on the one

* For further illustration of the thought that sanctification is effected through moral instrumentality, in accordance with man's rational nature, see the Sermon in this volume on 2 Cor. iii. 18, entitled "The Mirror."

† Erskine on the "Internal Evidences of Revealed Religion." In that work the point we are endeavouring to bring out is illustrated with great force and beauty. The book altogether is full of important matter, and seems to be open to but one objection of any moment, viz., that the line between justification and sanctification is not always kept very clear. An occasional tendency appears to represent the formation of a holy character as identical w th the pardon of sin, instead of making it a blessing connected with and consequent upon pardon.

hand, have been marked as very odious; nor would God, on the other, have been set forth as very worthy of esteem and admiration. No moral instrumentality, therefore, of a decided sanctifying tendency would have been brought to bear upon men's minds, in connection with the forgiveness of their sins. But here, as in other respects, the Gospel is every thing that can be desired. The demonstration, at once awful and affecting, which it affords of the heinousness of sin,—the exhibition which it makes of God as hating sin with an unutterable hatred while pitying the sinner with an equally unutterable compassion,—the necessity, arising from the perfection of his own nature, under which it represents God as laid, to be just even in justifying the ungodly;—these, among other features, renders it exactly such an instrumentality as is wanted for drawing men away from their attachment to sin, and filling them with that love to God,—love springing at once from an experience of his compassion and a perception of his excellence,—which is the essential principle of holiness.

Is this doctrine foolishness? or is it wisdom? Some may answer, foolishness; but this will not be the estimate of one who is perfect,—who has been spiritually enlightened, and led to take a broad and correct view of the redemption which he needs. Such an one will not be content with the theology (and it is the very best which those who reject the Gospel can substitute in its room) which teaches that men shall be forgiven their past offences if they repent of them, and strive after amendment of life in future. This meets with no response from his nature. It is altogether too meagre. It falls completely beneath his felt necessities. It speaks of pardon indeed, but pardon conferred in a way in which he cannot believe that it would be consistent with rectitude for God to bestow pardon. It reveals to him no adequate agent engaged to effect the renewal and sanctification of his soul.

It shows him no instrumentality adapted to accomplish that indispensably necessary end. It therefore cannot satisfy him. To preach such theology to him amidst his spiritual anxieties, is as though he asked for bread and you gave him a stone. On the contrary, when the Gospel brings its message to his ears; when it places Christ, in the glory of his person and the boundless merit of his atoning work, before his view; when it shows him not merely the remission of sins, but also the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit, secured by the death of Christ; when, in a word, he perceives in the doctrine of the cross a combination of all the possible motives which instrumentally are fitted to turn men away from their iniquities, he feels that he has here a scheme which answers the wants of which he is conscious; a scheme wisely, with divine wisdom, suited to the circumstances of his fallen condition.

III. But, in the third and last place, I observed that the Gospel commends itself as wisdom to them that are perfect *by its experimental effects;* by its being actually found, in the experience of individual believers, to produce the results which it professes to accomplish. Under the last particular I spoke of the Gospel as announcing pardon to sinners, and as furnishing a provision for turning them from sin to God. I made some observations also, by way of showing that, theoretically, the Gospel is adapted to accomplish the ends it contemplates, in a manner consistent with the principles of the human mind. But the question remains, Does it in fact do this? Does experience bear out its important and high pretensions? We mean, of course, the experience, not of those who reject the Gospel, or profess a mere nominal attachment to it, but of such as have received the love of the truth.

Now, with regard to pardon, experience does not directly tell us that we have obtained this blessing. We have no

access to the Book of God, so as to learn by immediate inspection of it that the dark sentence of condemnation, once standing opposite our names, has been erased by the pen dipped in Emmanuel's blood. All that we can here say is, that the Gospel gives the persuasion and the belief of pardon as no other system is able to do. It pacifies the guilty conscience, whose tumults no other voice can allay.

On the other point, however,—the sanctifying effect of the Gospel,—experience can at once be consulted: and, if we are honest in our inquiry, consulted with little danger of mistake. What then, my friends, is your experience in regard to the actual results of a belief of the Gospel? *Does* it change the heart? *Does* it destroy sinful affections, and draw the soul to God? Have not those of you who have believed the Gospel found this to be its effect? Did you ever love God till you came to a sight of the cross? Did you ever cordially serve him, till you trusted in his dear Son? Is it not the case that you never could be brought "to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world," till the Gospel taught you to do so? A believer will always be disposed to speak humbly of his spiritual character. He will never desire to refer to what he is, for the purpose of self-laudation. Still I am confident that every believer here will be prepared to testify that there is matter in his own history (though much, much less than he must wish there were) warranting him to affirm that the Gospel is an effective means of moral renovation.

Where there has been decided experience of the kind I allude to, he to whom it has been vouchsafed will have the best of all arguments for pronouncing the doctrine of the cross, wisdom. Let those on whom the Gospel has wrought no change, deride it as foolishness if they please. To him it "is the power of God and the wisdom of God." If, with alchymic virtue,—better than that fabled influence, the

secret of which philosophers laboured at one time so earnestly to discover, and which was supposed capable of changing the basest metals into gold,—the Gospel has made a Manasseh, a Zaccheus, a jailor like the Philippian, an Augustine, or a Bunyan, "a new creature;" if it has changed a degraded heart into a noble one, an earthly mind into a heavenly one; if it has turned selfishness into generosity, lust into purity, cruelty into kindness, hatred into love, passion into meekness, pride into humility, all, in fact, that is unamiable in human character into all that is good and lovely; if it has (I do not say) perfected such a transformation; but if it has introduced into one's nature the essential elements of the change: then, whatever may be thought of it by others, it must, in the judgment of the person renewed, be a plan of celestial wisdom.

The subject, my friends, which I have thus, at considerable length illustrated, I have chosen on this, the closing occasion of my ministry among you,* because it has enabled me, both to bring forward a number of the truths to which I have laboured to give prominence in the course of my public services as your pastor, and to indicate what I conceive to be the kind of evidence on which these truths are really felt, by Christians generally, to be worthy of acceptation and belief,—I mean, their internal and experimental evidences. There are many special things which I might have said on an occasion like this; and I may be permitted yet to allude (though I can do no more than allude) to the happiness with which I have lived among you,—to the kindness I have met with,—to the regret which I have experienced in being called to leave you,—to the interest that I feel in the congregation as a whole, and in its several members,—to my hope that the great King and Head of

* This was the Author's farewell sermon to his congregation at Hamilton.

the Church will in due time provide you with another pastor, a man after his own heart, one who will labour faithfully and with much success in this corner of the vineyard, —to my earnest trust that the harmony which at present prevails among you may be maintained, and that your conversation in every respect may "be as becometh the Gospel of Christ,"—and to my desire, in the view of the difficult duties that lie before me elsewhere, that you aid me by your prayers; as you may be well assured that I will not cease to pray for you, that God would make all grace abound towards you. There are many other things which are in my mind, and which I might have made the subject of special remark: but, laying all such specialties aside, I have chosen rather to close my ministry in this quarter, by an attempt to give you a glimpse into the heart of the Gospel system, and to indicate the method by which commonly, if not exclusively, a conviction of the truth and wisdom of the Gospel is produced. I dare not adopt the language of the great apostle of the Gentiles, in his address to the elders of the church of Ephesus,—"I am pure from the blood of all men,"—"Remember, that, by the space of three years, I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." I am too deeply conscious of the imperfections of my ministry to speak in such terms as these. But you will bear me witness that, whatever my shortcomings may have been, I have laboured to preach to you the doctrine of the cross. I have sought to keep habitually before your minds, the representation which the Scriptures give of Him with whom we have to do, as at once compassionate and righteous,—the apparently incompatible attributes of justice and mercy being harmoniously exercised in the salvation of sinners through Jesus Christ. I have striven to impress upon you, from Sabbath to Sabbath, the necessity of holiness as well as of pardon; and have pointed out to you the manner in which the former is attained, as well as the latter secured:

—pardon being bestowed upon the foundation of Christ's atonement,—and sanctification produced by the influence of the Spirit, through the instrumentality of the truth of the Gospel. I have wished not to neglect opportunities of directing professing Christians to try the genuineness of their faith, by examining whether their experience corresponds with the native tendency and professed operation of the Gospel. And the whole system of doctrine which I have taught, I have been accustomed to present to you, as evidencing itself to sincere inquirers. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." "He that believeth hath the witness in himself." And now, when we are about to part, what can be more appropriate, than that I urge once more upon all hearing me, the duty of examining the Gospel, pondering its revelations, considering the light in which these present Jehovah, considering likewise their suitableness to man's necessities,—doing this honestly, humbly, prayerfully? You may have difficulties, and may fail to see your way clear for a time; but every thing, if you persevere in such examination, will be made plain in the end. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth."

"Farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you."

XVII.

GLORY AND DOMINION ASCRIBED TO CHRIST.

"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."—REV. i. 5, 6.

THE words which have been read are a fervid and natural outburst of grateful affection, suggested by the mention of the Saviour's name.

They follow immediately upon the salutation with which, according to general custom, the apostle John, at the beginning of his epistle to the seven churches of Asia, greets those whom he was addressing. The form of the salutation is somewhat peculiar. In substance it is a prayer that the seven churches might enjoy the favour of a Triune Jehovah; but in referring to the several persons of the Godhead, he names the Saviour last. "John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come" (the everlasting Father); "and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne" (the Holy Spirit, described in terms indicative of the multiplicity and variety of his blessed influences); "and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth." I do not mean to offer any rea-

son for such an arrangement. Perhaps none could be given. The practice of the apostles in regard to this matter varied. Thus, in the benediction at the close of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, the Lord Jesus is named first: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." But what I wish to notice, as bearing upon the present subject is, that the name of the Lord Jesus falling, in the chapter before us, at the close of the salutation, the mind of the apostle seizes hold of it. The mention of it calls up to his recollection the immeasurable obligations under which he lies to the Redeemer; and, in the view of these, he cannot proceed till he has given utterance to his sentiments in the language of the text: "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Striking as the words of the text are in themselves, they must appear still more interesting when we consider whence they were derived. The text is an expression of the apostle John's sentiments, but not in his own language. The book which he was now sitting down to write, is a record of visions with which he had been favoured. In the first of these, the heavenly world had been disclosed to his view; and what had he beheld? The throne of God; and, in the right hand of Him who sat upon the throne, a book which no one was able to open till its seals were loosed by the Lamb, the Lion of the tribe of Judah. And, we are told, when *he* had opened the book, the hosts of the redeemed fell down before him and sung a new song, saying, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests."

Now, is it not apparent that the words which the beloved disciple had thus heard the redeemed singing in their blissful seats above, had taken deep possession of his mind, and that, in the passage before us, when he would express his sentiments of adoring gratitude to Christ, he simply adopts these, and repeats the hymn of the upper sanctuary? So much sympathy is there between saints on earth and saints in heaven! The blue curtain of the firmament separates them outwardly, but their hearts are one.

The apostle's ascription of eternal glory and dominion to Christ is founded upon three considerations: *first*, the benefits which believers receive from Christ—he "washed us from our sins, ... and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father;" *secondly*, the price at which these blessings were procured—"his own blood;" and, *thirdly*, the motive which induced Jesus to be at this expense on our account—love; he "loved us." On these points, in their order, I proceed to offer some remarks; and while we meditate upon a subject so fitted to excite devotional feeling, may He who made the hearts of the disciples who were journeying to Emmaus "burn within them while he talked with them by the way, and while he opened to them the Scriptures," lead us to lively apprehensions of the truth, and cause us to be suitably affected under it!

I. In enumerating the benefits which believers owe to Christ, the apostle mentions,

1*st*, That *he washes them from their sins;* language descriptive of deliverance, both from the guilt of sin, and from its pollution.

By the guilt of sin is meant the liability to condemnation under which sinners are laid by their transgression of the divine law. Sin necessarily exposes to condemnation, for "the wages of sin is death." All mankind therefore

are naturally in a state of condemnation, because "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." The sentence of a broken law stands against them in God's book. They are "children of wrath," justly obnoxious to, and actually under, the wrath of God. This is an awful state. No mind can imagine the whole that it involves, but enough can be conceived to appal the stoutest heart. Accordingly, when sinners are awakened to a consciousness of their real condition, they are miserable till some way is discovered to them by which they can obtain forgiveness of their iniquities, and be reconciled to their offended Maker. It was to open up a way of reconciliation for perishing men that Christ came into the world. The justice of God rendering it impossible that our offences could be pardoned, till satisfaction had first been made for them, Christ came to satisfy divine justice by dying in our room. He "bare our sins in his own body on the tree." He "hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour." And all who, under a sense of their guilt, humbly betake themselves to him, and trust in his atonement, are "saved from wrath through him." "We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." "Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Had it not been for the interposition of Christ, our guilt never could have been removed. But for him, every child of Adam must have continued hopelessly throughout eternity under "the curse of the law." No one of us could have himself rendered that satisfaction to divine justice, which would have made it a righteous thing in God to pardon his transgressions and to receive him into his favour. We are indeed prone to self-righteousness—prone to imagine that we can give unto God some ransom for our souls: but the thought is vain. The utmost that man could in any case be supposed to do, by way of compensating

for past sin, would be to lament it, and to make strenuous efforts after obedience in time to come. But though he were to do this (which, however, he never would, unless inclined thereto by the Spirit of God), tears, however sincerely shed, and zeal, however active, would not atone for sin. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, and that alone, can cleanse from guilt. If we therefore, my friends, are in the happy condition of pardoned sinners,—if God has reconciled us unto himself, and no longer imputes our trespasses unto us,—if he looks down from heaven upon us with a propitious countenance, pacified towards us for all our offences, and we can look up to him in return with filial confidence, and can address him in the language of the prophet, "Though thou wast angry with us, thine anger is turned away,"—the praise of all this must be ascribed to Jesus.

O blessed Saviour, Lamb of God! have we been forgiven all our sins for thy sake? Have we, unworthy of the divine favour in ourselves, been accepted in thee, the Beloved? Then unto thee "be glory and dominion for ever and ever!"

But we require to be sanctified as well as justified,—made holy as well as pardoned and accepted. Besides being delivered from the condemnation to which sin exposes, we need to be emancipated from its reigning power. And in this latter sense too, no less than in the former, Christ washes his people from their sins. The object of his interposition on their behalf was not simply to reconcile them to God, by obtaining for them the forgiveness of their past offences, but likewise to restore the lost image of God to their souls. He "loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

All, therefore, who are justified through faith in Christ, are made subjects of the sanctifying influence of his Spirit. Along with their change of state, they undergo a change of character. They "are born again." They become "new creatures." They "put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and are renewed in the spirit of their mind, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." "Of him," writes the apostle Paul to the Corinthians, "are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and *sanctification*, and redemption."

Unrenewed men may not consider the possession of a holy character as a very precious blessing, or one that calls for the exercise of very ardent gratitude to the Saviour. They have no desire to be sanctified. They would rather indulge their ungodly and wicked lusts than have these quenched. All that displeases them about sin is, that its gratifications pall too quickly, and that its "wages is death." They do not apprehend it as an evil in itself, nor long for deliverance from it on account of its intrinsic hatefulness. But, in truth, sanctification is the greatest of all blessings. Happiness could not exist without it. God himself could not make us happy, except by making us holy. His own infinite felicity springs from the moral perfection of his nature; and in order that we may be blessed as he is, we must first become holy as he is. Believers by whom this is understood, will cherish a habitual sentiment of gratitude to Christ, for the grace by which their souls have been sanctified. "Unto him," will be their heartfelt feeling, "that washed us from our sins,"—that not only washed out from the book of God's remembrance the sentence of condemnation once recorded against us there, but also washed our depraved souls from the sin with which they were defiled,—"unto him be glory and dominion for ever and ever!"

No doubt, much sin remains in the best of God's people here. They themselves acknowledge and lament the fact: witness the exclamation of the apostle Paul, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Still, they may be described as washed from sin, even in the sense of being freed from its influence, inasmuch as their characters, though not perfect, are essentially holy. They are not the willing slaves of iniquity in any of its forms. It may obtain occasional victories over them; but they do not cordially bow their necks to its yoke. They have had the good work of sanctification begun in them; accompanied with the assurance that it shall be carried forward by the same grace which has commenced it, till they are at last rendered pure as Christ is pure. You may see a picture of their condition in the partially-cleared fields which present themselves to view in every part of a country like this,—fields in the transition state, from wild and unbroken forest to land thoroughly reclaimed and cultivated. The trees have fallen beneath the hatchet of the labourer. The yokes of oxen have drawn the timber off; and what was once a useless wilderness, is now planted with valuable grain. But the change is only half accomplished. The burnt and blackened stumps of old hemlocks and pines are left, cumbering the ground, and impairing its fertility; and the wheat grows with comparative sparseness in the intervals between them. At the same time, every season loosens the hold which these have upon the soil. They are year by year hastening to decay; and the traveller who shall pass along the road a few summers hence, will perceive no trace of their having ever existed. So the work of sanctification has been commenced in the soul of the Christian; and commenced never to be abandoned till it is perfected. Sin no longer is master of him as it used to be. The corruptions, that raised their heads in uncontrolled rankness, have received their death-blow. They have been hewn

down, and only their roots left. Even the tendency of these is towards destruction: and in due time every one of them shall be pulled up; and the soul shall be made like the garden of the Lord, where not a weed remains mingled with the flowers and fruits of holiness.

2. The apostle still further describes Christ as having *made his people kings.* The general idea conveyed here is, that of dignity and honour. To be a king, is the highest of earthly conditions; and saints are, therefore, appropriately termed kings, because the condition to which they are raised is a most exalted one.

There is something kingly in the state of a Christian even now. In the elevating consciousness which he possesses of being a child of God,—in the sublime aspirations which he habitually cherishes,—in his superiority to the fleeting vanities of time and sense,—in the nobleness of his prevailing aims and pursuits,—and in his steady adherence to the path of duty, despite of consequences,—there is the truest stamp of royalty. When Paul stood before Agrippa, which would you say was the king? He whose understanding was convinced, but whose feeble will, unable to break the shackles of self-interest, carried him no further than the confession, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian?" or he who, raising his manacled arms, replied, "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds?" Paul was indeed a singular example of the nobility of soul which true religion produces. But you cannot look at a common believer,—one who is really and decidedly under the influence of divine grace,—without perceiving something akin to the spirit which that apostle displayed,—displayed habitually, no less than on the occasion to which I have referred. In so far as any one is subject to sin, he is a slave; for "whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." On the other hand, in so far as he is

freed from sin, he acquires the character of a king. He is elevated in the moral scale. He changes a position of servitude, and that of the worst kind, for one of dominion. He ceases to be ruled by his lusts: he is now the ruler. When holy angels look down to this earth, and ask one another, Where are the kings? they do not think of persons sitting upon thrones, wielding sceptres, having their brows encircled with golden diadems, or riding forth in outward pomp and splendour, such as attract the gaze of their fellow-mortals: but *king* in their language stands for one who possesses in his character the elements of essential dignity, who has been made a partaker of the divine nature, and whose thoughts and affections are above the terrestrial sphere in which he dwells.

It is principally, however, in the life to come that the kingly condition of God's people shall be made apparent. At present they are not so much in actual possession of royal honours (though they are so to a certain extent), as expectants of them. They are "heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised to them that love him."

We are unable to form very definite conceptions of the glory which awaits us in the life to come, but we at least know that it shall be very high. It shall bear some correspondence to the glory which has been conferred on Christ. "We shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." At the general judgment we shall be associated with him to some extent, in the sentences that shall issue from his lips. "Do ye not know," writes the apostle Paul to the Corinthians, "that the saints shall judge the world?" We shall sit down with him upon his throne. "To him that overcometh," he has promised, "will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Our royal dignity, like his, shall be everlasting. Saints are "begotten again into a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ

from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." O sovereignty most exalted! most earnestly to be coveted! I see the company of the redeemed, walking the streets of the new Jerusalem, with palms in their hands, and crowns upon their heads! Differing in glory, like the stars of the firmament, they are yet glorious every one; and all their glory they owe to Christ. Well, therefore, may they cast their crowns at his feet! And well may we, my believing friends, in anticipation of joining them, even more than on account of any earnest of such majesty that we may already have obtained, unite with the beloved disciple in saying, "Unto Him that .... hath made us kings, ... be glory and dominion, for ever and ever"!

3. But once more, Christ *makes his people priests.* The main idea contained under this figure is that of separation to the service of God. The priests under the Old Testament dispensation were separated from the rest of the people, that they might devote themselves to the service of the sanctuary. In like manner the people of Israel collectively are termed "a kingdom of priests," because God separated them from the other nations of the earth, that they might be a peculiar people to himself. These examples will show in what sense believers are called priests. They are separated from the mass of mankind, and dedicated to the service of the Most High,—called to that office, and qualified for it. They are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that they should show forth the praises of Him who has called them out of darkness into his marvellous light." *Others,* the miserable devotees of the god of this world, spend their lives in the service of "diverse lusts and pleasures,"—of their own sensuality, or ambition, or avarice, or pride, or the like; but *they* with sincere devotion, though (it may be) amidst much imperfection, are "offering up

spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ," are "presenting their bodies living sacrifices, holy, acceptable to God, which is their reasonable service." And if even in this life Christians are separated in a real and marked manner from the world that lieth in wickedness, the difference existing between them and others shall hereafter be made unspeakably wider and more apparent than it now is. When ungodly men shall have reaped the natural fruit of their own doings, in being for ever exiled from the presence of Jehovah and the enjoyment of his favour; the saints of God shall stand before him in his temple above, and serve him there night and day throughout eternity,—serve him with a zeal compared to which their utmost efforts here are perfect languor,—serve him without hindrance or distraction from remaining corruption, for they shall be the slaves of corruption no longer,—serve him with an enjoyment as far transcending aught that they experience in this state of being, as heaven is higher than the earth. Are we of the number to whom this priestly character belongs? Oh, that we were more impressed with our obligations to that Saviour by whom we have been distinguished from the children of the devil! Oh, that we could feel more of the holy gratitude that burns in the language which we desire to use, even while far, far from being able to rise to the full experience of what it expresses, "Unto Him that . . . hath made us . . . . priests unto God and his Father . . . . be glory and dominion, for ever and ever"!

II. But I proceed as proposed, *secondly*, to notice the expense at which Christ has procured for his people the blessings of redemption,—"his own blood."

In measuring the obligations under which you lie to an individual, you take into account not merely the value of the favours which you have received, but likewise the sac-

rifice on his part which the bestowal of these implied,—the labour or suffering to which he had to submit, in order that they might become yours. Suppose, for instance, that a person desirous of conferring a pecuniary benefit upon another, finds that he cannot do so without straitening himself, giving up his ease, and enduring personal privations; the favour in such circumstances will obviously be much greater than if he had had no occasion to abridge his own comforts, or to put himself to any inconvenience. Or, to take an example of higher self-devotion,—suppose that a person, beholding a sword ready to be plunged into the heart of a friend, throws himself between his friend and the threatened danger, and receives the fatal weapon in his own breast. The survivor, as he bends uninjured over the lifeless body of the other, will be affected, if he has a spark of generous feeling, not so much by the reflection, This individual has saved my life, as by the thought, He has done it at the expense of his own. These, of course, are but feeble illustrations of the matter before us. No instances of mere human devotedness can for a moment be thought of as parallels to what Christ did for his people. Like some mountain, towering high above all the surrounding hills, and losing its summit in the clouds, his interference in their behalf stands alone, in a grandeur to which nothing else approaches. But I have adduced the cases supposed, to make plain the general principle on which we are to proceed, in endeavouring to form some faint conception of our obligation to Jesus. We must think, not merely of the fact that we are indebted to him for benefits of eternal preciousness, but we must remember, at the same time, that to procure these for us his blood was shed.

When Christ is said to have redeemed his people with his blood, we are not to limit the reference of the expression to the actual shedding of his blood. The atonement

of our Saviour consisted, not exclusively in any one act of subjection to the law, but in the conjunction of all that he did and suffered from the time of his appearance in our world till he gave up the ghost. But his death was the consummation of his sufferings. It was the grand result in which they culminated. It both was in itself the severest and most eminent part of his obedience, and it formed the copestone which gave completeness and unity to what he had previously undergone. On this account the sacred writers speak of *his death* peculiarly as constituting the sacrifice through which his people are reconciled to God, and of *his blood* as the price with which he bought his people. They describe the whole by the mention of the main particular. The various lesser acts of the Saviour's suretyship are considered as comprehended in its chief and crowning act.

This explanation being made, let me invite you to dwell, for a little, in humble and devout meditation, upon the statement of the text: "He washed us from our sins *in his own blood*, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father." His own blood! The achievement of our redemption was therefore no light or trivial matter to the Saviour. It would have been easy for him to have given for us any amount of material treasures, if they could have been of the least avail. He might, in the exercise of the omnipotence which belongs to him as the second person of the Godhead, have brought innumerable worlds into existence by a word, stored them with all that is valuable, and made these an offering, if we could thus have been saved. He might have sent forth all the angelic hosts on the errand of our redemption, if their services could have been sufficient to restore lost souls to the favour and the image of God. But all this would have been in vain. It was necessary that he himself should become the Surety of his people, should bear their iniquities, and work out a righteousness for them. And this—

most wonderful fact!—he did. He—the Son of the Highest—left the throne of heaven, assumed our nature, was found in fashion as a man, and dwelt among men. He submitted to poverty and labour, to weariness and privations, to indignities and reproach, and every species of persecution. He was apprehended as a malefactor, and, on the false accusations of suborned witnesses, condemned to an ignominious and cruel death. "He gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: he hid not his face from shame and spitting." His hands and feet were fixed by nails to the cross; and, thus suspended betwixt heaven and earth, he was left gradually to expire under nature's exhaustion and the pure intensity of pain, consciousness never deserting him to the last. In his dying hours, moreover, as well as on numerous previous occasions, he was subjected to the malignant and bitter assaults of Satan,—assaults which, though they could not possibly prevail to seduce him into sin, might (we can easily conceive) occasion the greatest distress to his holy human spirit.

But the principal element in our Lord's sufferings,—that which rendered them most bitter to him, and which it is most essential for us to take into account,—remains to be noticed. I allude to the circumstance of his Father's face having been hid from him. Compared with this, all that he endured of common physical pain, and all the shame of the cross, and all the distress that resulted from the temptations of the devil, were but as little rills contributing their scanty waters to swell the bulk of a mighty and overflowing river. In order that Christ might fully satisfy divine justice, he required to bear the direct outpouring of his Father's wrath; and this he did undergo. He was "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." "It pleased the Lord to bruise him." He was "made," writes the apostle Paul, "a curse for us." None of us know,

while yet in the place of hope, what it is to endure the curse of a broken law. Sinners begin to have a taste of this when they are taken away in their iniquities, and cast into unquenchable fire. But even lost sinners understand not perfectly what the curse implies, for their experience of the wrath of God is at any time but partial. Throughout eternity they are only learning more and more of the awful doom which sin merits. But Christ, in his death, was made a curse in the fullest sense. Wrath went out against him to the uttermost. The overflowing cup, charged with every penal element involved in the sentence, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," was put into his hands by his own Father, and he drank it to the dregs.

In connection with these illustrations of the price with which we have been bought, it is important to remark that our Lord knew, in undertaking our redemption, all that he would have to undergo. A person under the influence of a generous spirit, may often, for the sake of others, enter upon a work involving personal hardship and sufferings greater than he originally contemplated, and which, if he had foreseen them, would have deterred him from taking a single step. But Christ, in becoming the representative of his people, was well aware that he could not accomplish their salvation without laying down his life for them. He knew that it was needful for the corn of wheat to fall into the ground and die, ere it could bring forth fruit. He knew that, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so he behoved to be lifted up, in order that he might draw all men unto him. He saw before him, from the beginning, as clearly as if every thing had been already fulfilled, the awful depth of humiliation to which he should be plunged,—the contempt that should be cast upon him,—and the innumerable sorrows that should pierce his heart. The garden of Gethsemane, with its soul-effecting agony,—the judgment-hall, with its

iniquitous sentence, its scourging, its buffeting, its mock sceptre, it purple robes, and crown of thorns,—Calvary, with its cross, its darkness, and the inward gloom occasioned by the desertion of his Father which that outward darkness so expressively yet imperfectly shadowed forth, —were all present to his view, when, on the question being put, who shall go on the errand of man's salvation? he answered, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God!"

If these things be so, how deep and constant, my believing friends, should be our emotions of gratitude to Christ! He "washed us from our sins, ... and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father," at the expense of "*his own blood.*" He has secured our salvation by an ignominious, painful, and accursed death endured in our room. O matchless sacrifice! May we not well say, "Unto him" who has purchased us at such a cost "be glory and dominion for ever and ever?"

III. This leads me, in the last place, to notice the reason which moved Christ to interpose for our redemption: he "loved us."

We sometimes read of Christ loving believers on account of the holy graces which they manifest, and the obedience which they render to the divine commandments. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him." The love spoken of in such passages is a sentiment of holy complacency, awakened by a perception of those qualities in believers which Christ desires them to possess. Every true believer (as we explained in an earlier part of the discourse) has been renewed in the spirit of his mind, and made to a certain extent the subject of the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, and so far therefore is one whom the Saviour must contemplate with satis-

faction. "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance doth behold the upright." Christ cannot but delight in those who bear his image. But the love mentioned in the text as having moved Jesus to lay down his life for his people, was of an entirely different nature from this. Instead of being elicited by the perception of excellence in those who were its objects, it was itself the prime source of every thing good in them. When Christ undertook our cause, we were viewed by him, not as wearing the image of God, but as persons who had lost that image by the fall—not as clothed with the beauties of holiness, but as guilty and depraved. We were contemplated as sunk in the pit of corruption, and destitute of every thing that could recommend us to his favour. "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

In contradistinction to the complacent and approving affection with which Jesus regards his people after their conversion, and which always bears a proportion to the measure of their holy conformity to himself, the love referred to in the text may be termed a love of compassion. The good Samaritan found the traveller, who had been robbed by thieves on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho, stretched half-dead upon the roadside, and the spectacle of perishing helplessness awakened his pity. So Christ beheld us lying in our blood; and our time, the time of our ~~eter-~~ extremity ~~nity~~, was a time of love. In the remoteness of a past eternity, the picture of a fallen world rose before his view. He perceived the progenitors of the human race, formed in innocence and happiness, and placed in a paradise where, in addition to every terrestrial comfort, they enjoyed sweet and unbroken communion with their Maker. He perceived a total eclipse come over the beauty of this scene—the

atmosphere of Paradise obscured by sin—the primeval pair driven from the garden—the unborn millions of our family all dying in Adam, inheriting the curse, and certain, if left to themselves, to lie for ever under condemnation. He saw this, and his heart yearned over the lost children of men. They had no claim upon his favour; every thing was the reverse. They had no advocate to plead with him on their behalf, except their misery appealing to the infinite tenderness of his nature. But pity prevailed. He engaged to become the Surety of his people; and to hew out of the quarry of perdition, in which mankind were universally sunk, stones which he might build into a living temple that should stand as an eternal monument of redeeming mercy.

As the love which induced Jesus to undertake his people's redemption was unmerited on their part, so it was perfectly sovereign on his. The rebellious angels, when they fell from their first estate, had no way graciously opened up for their recovery and restoration to the divine favour. Christ did not assume their nature, nor help them. He left them to endure the consequences of their transgression. Why did he not act in a similar manner toward us? The only answer which can be given is one which resolves the difference into Christ's sovereignty. In calling this procedure sovereign, we do not mean that it was arbitrary, or without reason. It would be blasphemy to attribute to the Saviour any thing like caprice in the selection of the objects of his compassionate interference, or to say that in passing over one, and saving another, he was guided by no principle of determination. Unquestionably, in both cases he must have had a principle of determination, and one that was worthy of himself. But we are quite unable to tell what was the ground of the preference that Christ showed to the fallen family of mankind above the angels that sinned; we merely know that

it was nothing of a meritorious nature in us. Whatever it was that determined him to set his love upon us, he would not have been violating essential justice, nor would he have given us any title to complain, if he had left us to perish and saved the fallen angels. This we express by saying that his love was sovereign in its exercise. And though the sovereignty of God must of necessity be always —even more perhaps than any other feature in the divine character—abhorrent to those whom the hand of mercy has not been stretched out to rescue, it should be received with profoundest adoration by us for whose redemption it has been the good pleasure of Jehovah's will to make provision, and who have been reconciled to him through his dear Son.

Of the greatness of the love which led Jesus to undertake our cause, I shall say nothing, except that, in the language of the apostle Paul, it "passeth knowledge." We cannot reflect on the particulars which have been brought forward in the previous part of this discourse, and which form the manifestations of the Saviour's love, without feeling that this is most literally the case. As there are depths in the ocean which no line can fathom, heights in the atmosphere to which no wing can soar, amplitudes in space which no instrument of the astronomer can measure, so the love of Christ, in its fulness, is beyond our comprehension. To understand it aright would require more than the strength of a seraph's mind, to feel it aright would require more than the glow of a seraph's heart, and to speak of it as it deserves to be spoken of, a seraph's speech would be inadequate.

A consideration of the motive which led to Christ's interposition on our behalf is the only thing, after what was previously adduced, that could be imagined as wanting to render his claim upon our gratitude complete. Had one of our fellow-men conferred upon us great benefits, at much

expense of labour and suffering to himself; and were it plain that he had been moved to do this simply by compassion for our unfortunate state, and by desire to promote our welfare, we should be looked upon by others, and would regard ourselves, as monsters, if we did not cherish a warm and grateful remembrance of such a benefactor. What, then, should be our feelings to Jesus? O! let us seek to be able to say with no feigned lips, "We love him because he first loved us." By all that we have received from him in time past, or hope to receive hereafter; by the free pardon of our sins and our reconciliation to God; by the gift of the Holy Spirit to renew and sanctify our hearts; by the royal honours of which we have even here an earnest —an earnest to be followed in due time by full fruition; by the mercy shown us in our separation from the mass of unconverted men, and dedication to the service of God; by the vast, the immeasurable cost at which we have been thus redeemed; and—crowning the whole—by the unmerited sovereign love which was the spring, deep in the bosom of the Saviour, from which his interposition on our behalf flowed;—by all this, O let us be stirred up, my believing friends, to cultivate sentiments of gratitude to Jesus! Let his name be embalmed in our hearts. Let our tongues delight in his praises. Let his words be sweeter than honey to our taste. Let his approbation be the chief object of our desire, and his commandments the constant rule of our conduct. Let us make it our song "in the house of our pilgrimage," as we hope that it shall be our song in the abodes of bliss—"Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

XVIII.

A RUNNING EXPOSITION OF THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK.

PREFATORY NOTE.

Even among pious persons a habit prevails, to too great an extent, of reading the Scriptures, and of hearing them read, unintelligently. The scope and connection of a passage are often not considered, the mind resting satisfied with finding excellent matter for meditation, and wholesome practical directions, in the sentences viewed as detached propositions. Or, perhaps, if a good meaning occurs as capable of being put upon a particular sentence, it is at once accepted without any inquiry being made whether it be the meaning which, according to the design of the Spirit of God, the sentence actually bears. By such a method of using the inspired Word, the beauty of many of its most exquisite passages is entirely missed, while the amount of benefit received is likely to be much less than one might expect to derive were he studying the Bible in a rational way. With the view of guiding the members of his congregation to a mode of reading the Bible different from that adverted to, the author occasionally made the portions of Scripture which were read as part of the public Sabbath service, the subject of a rapid commentary, meant to exhibit, in the way of example, how the understanding should seek to satisfy itself as to the meaning of the sacred oracles. In the running comments given, no attempt was made, or only the slightest, to illustrate the doctrine of the sacred writers, or to enforce the practical lessons which they taught; but it was simply sought to bring out *the precise meaning which they had*,—to indicate the scope of the passage read,—to show the connection of its several parts,—and to explain words or phrases that seemed in any way obscure; thus rendering the exercise an intelligent one. The portions of Scripture which it was contemplated to expound having first been made the subjects of thorough cri-

tical examination on the author's own part, he endeavoured to bring forth publicly, in a small compass, and in the simplest manner possible, the result of his private research and thought. In this way, besides other parts of the Bible, the Book of Habakkuk was gone over; and the notes on that Book will probably be recognised by those who sat under the author's ministry, as not very different from what was given them from the pulpit.

CHAPTER I.

VER. 1.—"The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see."

THE word "burden" is equivalent to prophetic announcement. It commonly refers to coming judgments, but sometimes it denotes the prediction of what is good. Nothing is known certainly regarding *Habakkuk*, except what may be gathered from his own prophecies. He probably lived a short time before the invasion of Judea by the Chaldean armies (See ch. i. ver. 5). His book details the judgments which God was about to bring upon the nation of the Jews for their wickedness, through the instrumentality of the Chaldeans. Judgments are also denounced in it against the Chaldeans, who (it is intimated) after executing the purposes of the Most High upon others, should themselves receive the just reward of their atrocities.

VER. 2.—"O Lord, how long shall I cry,
And thou wilt not hear!
Even cry unto thee of violence,
And thou wilt not save!"

The prophet had long lamented the wickedness that prevailed around him, and had prayed to God to put some effectual stop to it; but as it was not diminishing, he speaks as if his supplications were disregarded: "Thou wilt not hear." He specifies "violence," because, as the next verse more fully brings out, that was prominent among the sins of the land.

VER. 3.—"Why dost thou show me iniquity"—

God "showed" Habakkuk iniquity, by so situating him in providence that he was obliged to witness it.

> "And cause me to behold grievance?
> For spoiling and violence are before me,
> And there are that raise up strife and contention."

"There are." Persons of the character in question are numerous.

VER. 4.—"Therefore the law is slacked"—

Violence is so common, and has infected so much the rulers even, who ought to repress it, that *therefore*, on this account, law is utterly relaxed.

> "And judgment doth never go forth:
> For the wicked doth compass about the righteous,
> Therefore wrong judgment proceedeth."

In the above three verses we have a complaint uttered by the prophet, in the form of an appeal to Jehovah; and God now states in reply, that, for the iniquity of the Jewish people, he would bring upon them an invasion of the Chaldeans.

VER. 5.—"Behold ye among the heathen, and regard"—

The address here is to the Jewish people. Turn your attention to the heathen, and see among them the instrument by which I will bring deserved punishment upon you.

> "And wonder marvellously;
> For I work a work in your days,
> Which ye will not believe, though it be told you."

The words, "in your days," prove that Habakkuk must have prophesied not long before the Chaldean invasion. The apostle Paul quotes this sentence (Acts xiii. 41), applying it to the unbelieving Jews of his own time, and to the judgments that were impending over them for their rejection of the Gospel. It is not to be understood that the verse before us was a prophecy of the overthrow of Jerusalem by the Romans. It is not quoted as such. But that event corresponded, both in its nature and in its cause,

to the overthrow of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans (which alone is here predicted); and, therefore, the terms descriptive of the one were descriptive of the other also. The events were such perfectly similar examples of the divine procedure towards a nation, the cup of whose wickedness is full, that they might be foretold in identically the same words.

VER. 6.—"For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans,
That bitter and hasty nation,
Which shall march through the breadth of the land,
To possess the dwelling-places that are not theirs.
„ 7.—They are terrible and dreadful:
Their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves."

That is, they shall pass decrees according to their own absolute caprice, and bear themselves in the most haughty and imperious manner.

VER. 8.—"Their horses also are swifter than the leopards,
And are more fierce than the evening wolves:
And their horsemen shall spread themselves"—

"Spread themselves." The original term is one that expresses the vain-glorious display which the horsemen should make.

"And their horsemen shall come from far;
They shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat.
VER. 9.—They shall come all for violence:
Their faces shall sup up as the east wind"—

"The east wind" in Judea was of a scorching character, withering plants and herbage that were exposed to its blast. The idea is, that as the east wind spreads desolation, so the Chaldeans should devour all before them.

"And they shall gather the captivity" (*i.e.* captives) "as the sand.
VER. 10.—And they shall scoff at the kings,
And the princes shall be a scorn unto them:
They shall deride every stronghold;
For they shall heap dust, and take it."

The "heaping of dust" refers to the mounds raised against besieged cities.

VER. 11.—"Then shall his mind change"—

The Chaldean monarch is here spoken of; and the term "change" describes the fickle, capricious conduct of a person intoxicated with success.

"And he shall pass over, and offend"—

Shall "pass over" various countries, committing outrage wherever he goes.

"Imputing this his power unto his god."

Such is Jehovah's reply to the complaint that Habakkuk had made of the wickedness of the Jewish people. That reply opens a new source of anxiety to the prophet's mind. Must the people be entirely destroyed? Terrible thought! But no; the unchangeable perfection of God is a guarantee against this. He will, indeed, as is just, chasten us for our sins; but will not allow us to be overtaken by utter ruin. With this feeling he again addresses the Lord:—

VER. 12.—"Art thou not from everlasting,
O Lord my God, mine Holy One?
We shall not die."

Our destruction as a nation shall not be utter. Our punishment shall not go the length of national extinction.

"O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment;
And, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction."

In concluding that the nation "should not die" from the eternity (which must always be considered as involving the unchangeableness) of God, the prophet seems to proceed upon the view of such promises as we find in Ps. lxxxix. 30–33: "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail." The everlasting (and therefore immutable) One would assuredly not violate

his own covenant engagements by permitting his people to be completely destroyed.

The fact that God had ordained the Chaldeans to be his instruments in punishing the sins of the Jews, did not justify the Chaldeans in the atrocities which Habakkuk by revelation foresaw that they would commit. God's decrees do not interfere with man's responsibility. And the prophet, with the feeling of a philanthropist, a patriot, a worshipper of Jehovah, cannot contemplate these atrocities, even prospectively, without indignation and vehement desire that the Most High would interfere to put a limit to the outrages of the oppressor.

VER. 13.—"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil,
And canst not look on iniquity:
Wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously"—

"Deal treacherously;" rather, act oppressively; meaning the Chaldeans.

"And holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth
The man that is more righteous than he?"

Though extremely wicked, the Jews were less so than the Chaldeans. At all events, there were some among them who feared God, and who, in common with the rest of their countrymen, were in danger of being *devoured* by the undistinguishing foe.

VER. 14.—"And makest men as the fishes of the sea,
As the creeping things, that have no ruler over them?"

The events which the prophet contemplates are ascribed to God, as being dispensations of his providence. "That have no ruler;" that have none to care for, direct, or defend them, and which, therefore, fall easy victims to more powerful animals.

VER. 15.—"They take up all of them with the angle, ...
They catch them in their net,
And gather them in their drag;
Therefore they rejoice and are glad."

The figure of the previous verse is here carried out; and

the Chaldeans, extending their conquests with rapacious and insatiable ambition, are represented as fishers "taking with the angle, catching in their net, and gathering in their drag" every thing of which they could make a prey.

VER. 16.—"Therefore they sacrifice unto their net,
And burn incense unto their drag;
Because by them their portion is fat,
And their meat plenteous."

The Chaldeans did not in any degree recognise the hand of Jehovah in their successes: they took all the glory of these to themselves, and to their own skill and valour.

VER. 17.—"Shall they therefore empty their net,
And not spare continually to slay the nations?"

Shall their deeds of violence be permitted to go on? Shall they, after repeated conquests, still "empty their net" to prepare for new acts of aggrandizement? The prophet intimates, as before, his desire and hope that this might not be suffered to be the case.

CHAPTER II.

Habakkuk, having made the above appeal to Jehovah regarding the rapacity of the Chaldeans, and having asked whether God would not set a limit to their oppression, represents himself now as waiting for an answer.

VER. 1.—"I will stand upon my watch,
And set me upon the tower"—

He compares himself to a sentinel keeping his "watch" on some "tower" or post of observation. There is no reason to suppose that there is reference to any particular place to which the prophet was accustomed to repair, when expecting divine communications. The words appear to be simply metaphorical. Like a sentinel keeping his watch upon a tower, Habakkuk remained looking out for a reply to his expostulation.

"And will watch to see what he will say unto me,
And what I shall answer when I am reproved."

The translation, "when I am reproved," does not convey the idea of the original. The literal rendering is, "upon my argument," or "upon my matter of discussion." Habakkuk had entered into what may be termed an argument with Jehovah. He had presented his complaint; Jehovah had responded to that; the prophet had followed with an expostulation; and he now pictures himself as standing in an attitude of expectation, to see what Jehovah would say unto him, and what he on his part should again reply to God *upon his argument;* upon the subject, that is, of the discussion (using the word reverentially) into which he had entered with the Most High. At length, the looked-for response from the Lord came, to the effect that the Chaldeans should in due season be visited with the punishment which their crimes deserved, and that the issue of the divine dispensations should be the universal diffusion of the knowledge of God among mankind.

VER. 2.—"And the Lord answered me, and said,
Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables,
That he may run that readeth it."

There is here a figurative reference to edicts written in large characters, and posted in places of public resort, that every one might read them, and *run* or hasten to perform what was required. So it is directed that the communication about to be made to Habakkuk, be set forth plainly to the Jewish people; in order that it may awaken suitable sentiments within them, and lead them to a proper course of conduct. I may observe that this last clause, "that he may run that readeth it," is often absurdly quoted, with its members inverted, "that he that runs may read."

VER. 3.—"For the vision is yet for an appointed time,
But at the end it shall speak, and not lie."

"For an appointed time." The things about to be predicted, were not to happen quite presently; but the time of their accomplishment was fixed in the divine mind.

"Though it tarry, wait for it;
Because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

The double use of the word "tarry" by our translators is somewhat infelicitous, as unnecessarily creating an appearance of opposition between the two clauses. This does not occur in the original, where the terms employed are different. The meaning is obvious. Though the prediction be long in receiving its accomplishment, wait for it; because the thing foretold shall surely come to pass; it will not delay beyond the appointed time.

VER. 4.—"Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him;
But the just shall live by his faith."

The prophet in this verse, before proceeding with his exposition of the crimes and consequent doom of the Chaldeans, glances at the two widely contrasted classes among his countrymen, the ungodly and the pious:—by the former of whom, his predictions regarding impending judgments were received with self-confident scorn: "His soul which is lifted up is not upright in him;"—while to the latter he points out their true refuge, until the coming calamities should be overpast, and the yoke of the oppressors broken: "But the just shall live by his faith." Those who trusted in an arm of flesh, should (it is implied) find their confidence a broken reed, and should miserably perish; but those who exercised faith in God, should be protected by his power, and delivered from danger, as far as that was for God's glory and their own good. The sentence, "The just shall live by his faith," is the announcement of a great general principle; not restricted in its application to the case of the Jews who lived when Habakkuk wrote; but holding good in all circumstances, and with reference to all kinds of anticipated evil. The apostle Paul quotes the words, in connection with the previous statement regarding the certainty of God's promises (ver. 3), for the purpose of encouraging the Hebrew converts of his own day to persevere in their adherence to Christ, whatever

persecutions they might be subjected to, Heb. x. 37, 38—"For yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." The people of God, in the time of the apostle, were in a position very analogous to that of God's people in the time of the prophet: both were threatened with imminent outward dangers; to both, the same ground of strength and consolation is held forth,—the certainty of the divine promises; and on both, the same duty is enjoined,—faith in God. The passage before us is likewise quoted by the apostle Paul in two other well-known places: Rom. i. 17, "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith;" and Gal. iii. 11, "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident; for the just shall live by faith." It would be confounding every rule of interpretation, were we to imagine that the words in Habakkuk have any direct intended reference to what the apostle is treating of in both these places,—the doctrine of justification by faith. They have not. Yet the quotations are appropriately made; inasmuch as the method in which sinners obtain justification before God, is substantially, and, as far as the principle of the thing is concerned, identical with that in which they are enabled to enjoy peace and safety amidst surrounding earthly troubles. In both cases, the result is secured by faith in God: faith which in each instance lays hold upon the divine promises having respect to the particular case. Faith apprehends, in the former instance, the promise of salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ; and in the latter, the various declarations of Scripture relating to the troubles which the people of God are called to endure,—as, for example, "Because thou hast made the Lord which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague

come nigh thy dwelling;" or, "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine: when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee;" or, once more, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

From this point the remainder of the chapter is occupied with a representation of the wickedness and destined punishment of the Chaldeans.

VER. 5.—"Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine,
He is a proud man, neither keepeth at home."

Ancient profane authors testify that the Chaldeans were greatly addicted to the excessive use of wine, and to dissoluteness of every species; and their habits in this respect are here mentioned as a chief *cause* that contributed to the formation of their proud and violent characters. We can easily picture to our imaginations the Babylonian king and his nobles intoxicating themselves at their banquets, and when heated by intemperate indulgence, forming and entering upon new schemes of aggression.

"Who enlargeth his desire as hell" (properly, "the grave.")

"There are three things that are never satisfied; yea, four things say not, It is enough; the grave," &c.

"And is as death, and cannot be satisfied,
But gathereth unto him all nations,
And heapeth unto him all people."

Such being the dissolute, proud, rapacious character of the Chaldeans, judgment, it is intimated, should certainly overtake them. The time was coming when the inhabitants of the various lands which had been wasted by the Chaldean armies, would sing songs of triumph over the extinction of the name of their oppressors.

VER. 6.—"Shall not all these take up a parable" (or song) "against him,
And a taunting proverb against him, and say,
Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! how long?"

They shall tauntingly ask, "How long" has his dominion continued? He thought that it should last for ever. He has found how greatly he was mistaken.

"And to him that ladeth himself with thick clay!"

There has been a difference of opinion as to the meaning of the term rendered "thick clay." Probably the correct interpretation is not that given in our version, but "an accumulation of pledges." A grasping usurer, who, by every species of fraud and harshness, is gathering an accumulation of pledges into his hand, is certainly an expressive emblem of the Chaldeans, with their vast, but ill-gotten, dominions and treasures.

VER. 7.—"Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee"—"They;" the ministers of divine vengeance upon the Chaldeans.

"And awake that shall vex thee,
And thou shalt be for booties unto them?"

How "suddenly," according to the prediction, destruction overtook the Chaldeans, we have only to read the story of Belshazzar's feast, to perceive.

VER. 8.—"Because thou hast spoiled many nations,
All the remnant of the people shall spoil thee;
Because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land,
Of the city, and of all that dwell therein."

The words, "men," "land," "city," are here to be taken indefinitely. The meaning is, that the ruin denounced should overtake the Chaldeans because of the blood of men which they had shed,—because of the violence they had done to various lands,—because of the cities they had overthrown, and the outrages they had perpetrated upon their inhabitants.

VER. 9.—"Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house,
That he may set his nest on high,
That he may be delivered from the power of evil!
„ 10.—Thou hast consulted shame to thy house
By cutting off many people,
And hast sinned against thy soul."

The Chaldean monarchs thought that by extending their conquests they were perpetuating the rule and glory of their families: whereas, on the contrary, they were laying up for their families a heritage of "shame;" it being impossible for the Judge of all the earth to allow their crimes to pass, without signal tokens of his retributive displeasure. "Thy soul," according to a common Hebrew idiom, is equivalent to *thyself*. The wickedness of the oppressors led ultimately, and by a law of divine providence as unfailing as that which keeps the planets in their courses, to their own destruction.

VER. 11.—"For the stone shall cry out of the wall,
And the beam out of the timber shall answer it."

What a striking personification! The very materials of the palaces which the conquerors built, out of the spoils of surrounding nations, "for the honour of their majesty," are represented as crying to Heaven for vengeance.

VER. 12.—"Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood,
And stablisheth a city by iniquity!
„ 13.—Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts"—

Shall not the Lord of hosts bring it about—

"That the people shall labour in the very fire,
And the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?"

The cities built by the Chaldeans with such labour and at such cost, were to become food for the flames; and the toil expended upon them would thus prove to have been thrown away.

VER. 14.—"For the earth shall be filled
With the knowledge of the glory of the Lord,
As the waters cover the sea."

Had the Chaldeans been permitted to prevail so far as utterly to destroy the Jewish nation, this would have involved the extinction of the light of true religion among mankind; for the knowledge of God was confined to the Jewish people. It would have involved the infraction of the covenant made with Abraham, "In thee shall all the

families of the earth be blessed." This could never be. The promise was sure. And its certainty implied as a consequence the overthrow, in due season, of the enemies of God's people. We thus perceive the connection indicated by the word "for." The Chaldeans shall not prevail to the extent of their unbridled wishes. They shall not utterly destroy the Jewish nation. That nation "shall not die;" but their oppressors shall themselves perish, reaping the just reward of their crimes, in order that the Jews, whom they have carried captive, may be restored to their own land; and that Jehovah's gracious purposes to mankind,—purposes bound up with the preservation of the Jewish people,—may receive their accomplishment: "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

VER. 15.—"Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink,
That puttest thy bottle to him,
And makest him drunken also,
That thou mayest look on their nakedness!"

Though intemperance (see ver. 5) was a prevailing sin among the Babylonians, yet it seems plain that the language in this and the succeeding verse is not to be taken literally. The Chaldeans made the surrounding nations "drunk" by the tremendous inflictions with which they visited them. They held the cup of violence and outrage to their lips, and forced them to drink its contents. In like manner, they "looked upon the nakedness" of these nations, by exposing them to every species of disgrace. For this a woe is denounced against them. It is intimated that they should suffer similar things. The calamities to be inflicted upon Babylon were to be the counterpart of those which she had been the means of inflicting.*

* Compare the prophecy regarding Edom (Lam. iv. 21): "Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, that dwellest in the land of Uz: the cup also shall pass through unto thee; thou shalt be drunken, and shalt make thyself naked;"—and the prophecy regarding Nineveh (Nahum iii. 5, 11):

VER. 16.—"Thou art filled with shame for glory:
Drink thou also, and let thy foreskin be uncovered:
The cup of the Lord's right hand shall be turned unto thee,
And shameful spewing shall be on thy glory.
„ 17.—For the violence of Lebanon shall cover thee"—

"The violence of Lebanon" is, the violence done to Lebanon; and Lebanon again is poetically put for the land of Judea. This is beautifully illustrated by the language of the prophet Ezekiel, who represents the invasion of Judea by Nebuchadnezzar under the emblem of an eagle coming to Lebanon and breaking off the branches of its cedars: "A great eagle" (Nebuchadnezzar) "with great wings, long-winged, full of feathers, which had divers colours, *came unto Lebanon*, and took the highest branch of the cedar" (Jehoiachin, king of the Jews, whom Nebuchadnezzar made captive). "He cropped off the top of his young twigs, and carried it into a land of traffic," &c. The violence done to Lebanon,—to the land of Judea,—"covered" those who wrought it, by returning in overwhelming retribution upon their heads.

"And the spoil of beasts, which made them afraid"—

Having used Lebanon as an emblem of Judea, the prophet now, by a natural extension of the figure, likens the inhabitants of Judea to the animals abounding in the forests of that great mountain: "The spoil of beasts, which made them (the beasts) afraid," means, the ravages committed among them by the spoiler; the ravages, that is, inflicted upon the Jewish people. The two following lines declare literally what has just been expressed in figurative language:

"Because of men's blood, and for the violence of" (done to) "the land,
Of" (done to) "the city, and of" (done to) "all that dwell therein."

The utter inability of the idols which the Chaldeans worshipped to deliver them out of the hand of Jehovah in the

"I will discover thy skirts upon thy face, and I will show the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame. . . . . Thou also shalt be drunken."

day of his wrath, as well as the vanity and irrational folly of idol-worship in every respect, is next adverted to.

VER. 18.—"What profiteth the graven image
That the maker thereof hath graven it;
The molten image, and a teacher of lies,
That the maker of his work trusteth therein,
To make dumb idols?"

Idols are called "teachers of lies," because their worship is essentially a system of falsehood and error. "Trusteth therein to make," &c.; that is, How comes it that the maker of idols can have such trust in his work, that he can trouble himself to execute it?

VER. 19.—"Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake;
To the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach!"

It would be better to change the punctuation of this last line, and to place a full stop after "arise;" viewing the succeeding words as the beginning of the terribly sarcastic rejoinder which the prophet makes to the stupid devotion of the idol-worshippers: "Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise!" (Stir thyself up, come, help, teach us!)—"*It* teach!" *It* awake or arise for the help of its devotees. What is it?

"Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver,
And there is no breath at all in the midst of it.
VER. 20.—But"—

How sublime the contrast!

"The Lord is in his holy temple:
Let all the earth keep silence before him."

CHAPTER III.

VER. 1.—"A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth."

The final chapter of the Book of Habakkuk is closely connected, in respect of subject, with the two preceding ones, and forms their appropriate complement. It is entitled a "prayer," because it opens in the language of supplication, and possesses a devotional character through-

out. "Shigionoth" is a term the true import of which is by no means certain. It probably has reference to the measure in which the ode or hymn that follows was composed.

The prophet, having been made acquainted with the impending Chaldean invasion, is introduced as expressing to Jehovah the feelings with which the prospect of that calamity inspired his mind; and as earnestly beseeching God still to be merciful to his people.

VER. 2.—"O Lord, I heard thy speech, and was afraid."

The words, "thy speech," refer to the announcement which the Lord had made to Habakkuk of his purpose to bring the Chaldean armies against the land of Judea. When the prophet heard this he was "afraid." The allusion is not to the solemn and awful emotions which a revelation from Jehovah, whatever might be its subject-matter, would produce; but (as the subsequent part of the chapter proves—see particularly ver. 16) to the dread which Habakkuk felt on his own account, and on account of his country and the cause of God, in contemplating the irruption of the Chaldean hosts.

"O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years,
In the midst of the years make known;
In wrath remember mercy."

By the "work" of the Lord we are to understand his chosen people, the Jews. This name is applied to them in Isaiah xlv. 11,—"Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons; and concerning the *work* of my hands command ye me." The prophet, therefore, beseeches Jehovah to revive his chosen people, the seed of Abraham, —a prayer which includes two things: first that God would turn them from their wicked ways and incline their hearts to his fear and service; and, secondly, that he would free them from the external miseries and dangers into

which they had been brought by a departure from the Most High. The passage under review is often familiarly quoted with the implied interpretation that the work of God means true religion, vital piety. "Revive thy work" is supposed to be equivalent to, Reawaken a spirit of true religion throughout the land. And certainly Habakkuk's prayer includes this, though it includes also something more. But by the rendering referred to, the idea is brought out in a wrong way. The word "revive" is never, according to scriptural usage, connected with religion. Persons are revived, not piety. The familiar style of the Sacred Oracles is, revive *us*, quicken *us*. "In the midst of the years" means, now, in this our day. The expression, "make known," is elliptical, but the meaning evidently is, make known thy power and grace in turning thy people to thyself, and in delivering them from impending calamities.

The purport of the ode, to which the above prayer is an introduction, may be described in a single sentence. The Chaldean armies are about to sweep in desolating tide over the land; the Jewish nation is, in itself, helpless against such a foe; but Jehovah, the God of Israel, is omnipotent; he has often interposed in a marvellous way for his people in times past; and he is able to shield those who trust in him still. None, therefore, who really fear him, and are making him their stay, need to be alarmed. This is what the ode amounts to, brought down to simple prose. But the ideas of the prophet are not uttered in the language of prose. Under the influence of a divinely elevated and warmed imagination, he gives his thoughts forth in imagery of singular splendour and sublimity; and his diction, like his conceptions, is grand. He sees the wonders that God wrought for Israel of old depicted as in a panorama, where, however, general images of majesty and power predominate over particular definite occurrences; and the few great particular incidents which do

exhibit themselves, appear, not in their minute details, but only in the broadest form. The calm security of soul in which the view of Jehovah's former actings, thus delineated to his imagination, leaves the prophet, is expressed at the close of the ode in sweet and beautiful lines, felt to be all the more sweet and beautiful from their contrast with those which precede.

> VER. 3.—"God came from Teman,
> And the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah."

The reference here is to the manifestations which God made of himself in leading the people of Israel up through the wilderness, from Egypt to the land of Canaan. "Teman" was a city of Idumea; and "Paran," a mountain in the same country; and they may be taken as standing for the district generally in which they are situated, which was the scene of some of Jehovah's most remarkable appearances. We suppose the district which Teman and Paran represent to extend so far as to include mount Sinai. There is no doubt that in specifying these two names, Habakkuk had in his mind "the blessing wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death," the opening words of which are, "The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them: he shined forth from *mount Paran*, and he came with ten thousand of his saints." As, also, the song of Deborah, "Lord, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled," &c. The meaning of the word "Selah" is somewhat doubtful. It probably notes a pause in the song.

> "His glory covered the heavens,
> And the earth was full of his praise.
> VER. 4.—And his brightness was as the light."

By "the light" is meant the sun. These lines are sometimes regarded as referring specifically to the occasion when Jehovah descended in fire upon mount Sinai, and "there

were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud." But the force of the passage is much better preserved, by our throwing away the notion of any such definite reference, and supposing that we have here just a poetic picture of Jehovah, similar to that which David gives us, when (in speaking of the manner in which the Lord delivered him from the hand of his enemies) he describes God as emitting "a smoke out of his nostrils," "bowing the heavens and coming down," "riding upon a cherub," &c.—(Ps. xviii. 8–10.) This, and much more imagery of a like kind in the eighteenth Psalm, is manifestly no more than the poetical ornature of the simple fact that God gloriously and powerfully interposed to deliver David from his enemies. In like manner, the general style of Habakkuk's hymn would lead us to consider the lines before us, not as pointing to any particular occasions when heaven and earth were literally in a blaze with the effulgence of the divine presence, but simply as describing the Most High, conceived by the imagination as coming forth in a radiant and majestic form for the deliverance of his people, and performing deeds worthy of praise. The features of the description, however, may reasonably be supposed to have been derived from the visible circumstances of the descent of the Lord upon mount Sinai.

"He had horns coming out of his hand."

Here the delineation of the poetically-imagined form of Jehovah is continued. By "horns" are meant rays of light. "Arabic poets compare the first rays of the rising sun to horns, and hence call the sun itself the gazelle."—(*Gesenius.*) The phrase, "out of his hand," is probably equivalent to "from him," a part of the body being put for the whole.

"And there was the hiding of his power."

"There," amidst the effulgence with which he was sur-

rounded, and which streamed from his person, Jehovah, the *all-powerful* One, was *hidden;* "dark" (as one of the first of uninspired writers has rendered the thought) "with excessive bright."

VER. 5.—"Before him went the pestilence,
And burning coals went forth at his feet."

"At his feet," is a Hebrew idiom for, behind him. The word translated "burning coals," means a fever or burning plague. So that, besides the splendour attributed to Jehovah's person, the circumstances, so terrible to the enemies against whom he was going forth, is now introduced of pestilence, in one form, preceding him ; and pestilence, in another form, marching in his rear.

VER. 6.—"He stood, and measured the earth"—

Cast a glance over it ; the effect of which the following lines describe.

"He beheld, and drove asunder the nations ;
And the everlasting mountains were scattered,
The perpetual hills did bow."

The "scattering of the mountains," and the "bowing of the hills," are figures which represent the irresistible power of Jehovah, and the easy and signal overthrow which those experienced against whom he contended.*

"His ways are everlasting."

This means, such were his ways "of old;" such were his ancient interpositions for his people. The word rendered "everlasting," does not necessarily denote eternity in the strict sense. It is the same with that used by the prophet Isaiah when he says that Jehovah "bare" his people, "and carried them all the days *of old.*"—(Is. lxiii. 9.)

* Compare the words of David in the eighteenth Psalm, "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God : he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears. Then the earth shook and trembled : the foundations also of the hills moved, and were shaken, because he was wroth."

VER. 7.—"I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction;
And the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble."

"The curtains;" that is, which formed the coverings of the tents in which the Midianites dwelt. This verse contains a rapid glance at the victories achieved by Gideon over the Midianites and the allied nomadic tribes. In the verse that follows we have a magnificent allusion to the wonders that God wrought at the Red Sea and the river Jordan.

VER. 8.—"Was the Lord displeased against the rivers?
Was thine anger against the rivers?
Was thy wrath against the sea,
That thou didst ride upon thine horses
And thy chariots of salvation?"

"Chariots of salvation;" chariots in which thou didst ride forth to save thy people.

VER. 9.—"Thy bow was made quite naked,
According to the oaths of the tribes, even thy word. Selah."

"Quite naked." The bow, when not about to be used, was kept in a cover, to preserve it from injury. The making of God's bow "naked," is, therefore, the drawing of it out from its sheath, with a view to its being used against his enemies. "According to the oaths of the tribes, even thy word:" Jehovah's glorious interpositions were made in fulfilment of what he sware to the tribes of Israel; this took place according to his word or promise, (See Ps. cv. 9, "Which covenant he made with Abraham, and his *oath* unto Isaac," &c.)

"Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers.
VER. 10.—The mountains saw thee, and they trembled:
The overflowing of the water passed by:
The deep uttered his voice,
And lifted up his hands on high.
„ 11.—The sun and moon stood still in their habitation."

The prophet in these lines renews his delineation of the effects of Jehovah's appearance for his people; still employing general images, derived from the convulsions of

external nature. He begins with earthquake. "The cleaving of the earth with rivers," is, the breaking of the earth into chasms, which form the channels of rivers. While the surface of the earth is thus torn, he represents even the solid mountains as quaking. Next, he describes an overwhelming deluge of rain. This is the meaning of the words translated "the overflowing of water." It "passed by;" *i. e.*, passed over the field of the prophet's observation. Then, "the deep," the ocean, roars; and lifts up "its hands," its waves, on high. Lastly, the sun and moon, the orbs of heaven, "stand still," amazed, overawed, feeling even in the firmament the dreadful glory of the occasion. It is sufficiently obvious that, in this last line, the prophet had in view the standing still of the sun upon Gibeon, and of the moon in the valley of Ajalon, when Joshua smote the five kings of the Amorites. At the same time, it seems no less obvious that Habakkuk is not immediately referring to the historical event, nor wishing to fix the minds of his readers upon it, but is merely borrowing from it a splendid image, peculiarly appropriate to his purpose. No special historical incidents answer to the cleaving of the earth with rivers,—to the trembling of the mountains,—to the overflowing of the water,—or to the ocean uttering his voice and lifting up his hands; and it would be introducing a disagreeable incongruity, and greatly detracting from the poetical effect of the passage, were we to suppose the prophet, when at the very climax of his flight, suddenly passing from the region of imagination into that of historic matter of fact. Attention has hitherto been concentrated upon Jehovah, and upon the effects of his appearance. In the succeeding lines, his people, at whose head* it was that he went forth, come into view, following him as their leader, and marching

* "O God, *when thou wentest forth before thy people*, when thou didst march forth through the wilderness," &c.—Ps. lxviii. 7.

forward where the gleam of his arrows and spear invites them on.

"At the light of thine arrows they" (thy people) "went,
And at the shining of thy glittering spear.
VER. 12.—Thou didst march through the land in indignation,
Thou didst thresh the heathen in anger.
„ 13.—Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people,
Even for salvation with thine anointed:"—

By "thine anointed," we are to understand (as the parallelism shows) the people of Jehovah. (Compare Ps. cv. 14, 15, "He suffered no man to do them wrong; yea, he reproved kings for their sakes; saying, Touch not mine anointed.") A rendering which the original words admit of, and which would have brought out the sense more clearly, is, "even for the salvation of thine anointed."

"Thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked,
By discovering the foundation unto the neck. Selah."

This last line evidently is intended to describe the completeness of the discomfiture inflicted. But the language appears to an English reader somewhat harsh. It is possible that the phrase "unto the neck," may have been used idiomatically among the Jews, to express the notion of utter ruin. In this case, the line would be equivalent to, *by completely discovering the foundation:* where the unbroken mataphor would be taken from a house razed to its very base.

VER. 14.—"Thou didst strike through with his staves the head of his villages:"

"With his staves;" with his own javelins: referring to the enemies of Israel.

"They came out as a whirlwind to scatter me:"

"Me:" Habakkuk here speaks as identifying himself with Israel of old.

"Their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly."

Perhaps in these lines the prophet had present to his mind the occasion when Pharaoh, like a whirlwind, came forth in pursuit of the children of Israel, as they were departing

from Egypt. The form of expression, in the two lines which follow, seems to favour this idea.

VER. 15.—"Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses,
Through the heap of great waters."

Such are the sublime and glowing illustrations, which presented themselves to Habakkuk's mind, of Jehovah's former interpositions for his people. He now proceeds to state the effect produced upon him by the remembrance of what God had wrought.

VER. 16.—"When I heard, my belly trembled"—

That is, "when I first heard" the announcement regarding the Chaldean invasion—

"My lips quivered at the voice:
Rottenness entered into my bones,
And I trembled in myself,
That I might rest in the day of trouble"—

That is, anxiously considering where rest might be found. "The day of trouble" is defined, in what follows, to be the day of invasion.

"When he cometh up unto the people,
He will invade them with his troops."

But the alarm thus awakened in Habakkuk's mind by the prospect of the Chaldean invasion, gave place, when he reflected upon God's works of old, to a sweet and holy confidence. His feeling now is, the enemy may come, and make the face of the land desolate, but I have God as a never-failing stay and comfort to my soul.

VER. 17.—"Although the fig-tree shall not blossom,
Neither shall fruit be in the vines;
The labour of the olive shall fail,
And the fields shall yield no meat;
The flock shall be cut off from the fold,
And there shall be no herd in the stalls;
" 18.—Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,
I will joy in the God of my salvation.
" 19.—The Lord God is my strength,
And he will make my feet like hinds' feet"—

Enabling me to escape present danger—

"And he will make me to walk upon mine high places"—

In peace and safety.

THE HYMN OF HABAKKUK.

[The following is an attempt to present this composition in the dress of English verse. It will be observed that where the version in our Bibles does not convey the idea of the original properly, we have assumed the emendations brought out in the exposition given above.]

God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah.

From Paran hill Jehovah came;
From Teman, Israel's Holy One.

(*Pause.*)

His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. And his brightness was as the light [the sun]; he had horns [rays] coming out of his hand [from him]: and there was the hiding of his power.

Then glorious did he make his name,
And wonders by his hand were done.
Refulgent, like the sun, he beamed,
A radiance from his presence streamed—
Excessive in its blaze, that light
Veiled, while it showed, the Lord of might.

Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals [plague] went forth at his feet [behind him.]

Before him passed, on wings of gloom,
His messenger, the dread Simoom;
And close behind his footsteps came
The Pestilence, with breath of flame.

He stood and measured the earth: he beheld and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow. I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. Was the Lord displeased against the rivers? was thine anger against the rivers? was thy wrath against the sea,

He stood and looked. Before his look
The nations were asunder driven;
The everlasting mountains shook;
The hoary hills were riven.
—I saw the tents of Cush dismayed,
And Midian's curtains were afraid.
—Was the Lord wroth against the sea?
Wast thou displeased at Jordan's tide,

that thou didst ride upon thine horses, and thy chariots of salvation? Thy bow was made quite naked, according to the oaths of the tribes, even thy word. Selah.

That on thy steeds of victory,
And in thy chariots, thou didst ride?
—His bow was made quite bare,
After the oath which to the tribes he sware.

(*Pause.*)

Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers. The mountains saw thee, and they trembled; the overflowing of the waters passed by: the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high. The sun and moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of thine arrows they went, and at the shining of thy glittering spear. Thou didst march through the land in indignation, thou didst thrash the heathen in anger. Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed; thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck. Selah.

Jehovah, when thy might appeared,
The mountains saw thee, and they feared.
The earth was rent. The waters poured
In deluge from the sky.
The ocean roared,
And lifted up its hands on high.
The sun and moon in their abode
Stood still; while by thine arrows bright,
Thy people forth to victory rode;
Thy glittering javelin was their light.
Thou didst direct their conquering path,
And thresh the heathen in thy wrath.
Thus to th' anointed ones he brought relief,
And saved the nation which he chose—
Smiting, with utter overthrow, the chief
Of all who were his people's foes.

(*Pause.*)

Thou didst strike through with his staves the head of his villages; they came out as a whirlwind to scatter me: their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly. Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses, through the heap of great waters.

When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops.

Forth, whirlwind-like, th' oppressor rushed—
Thy feeble flock he would have crushed,
But whelmed beneath the surging wave,
His haughty princes found a grave.
Thy horses through the waters vast,
The deep and boiling waters, passed.
—Now troops once more against us come,
I heard the rumour, and was pained.
My cold and quivering lips were dumb;
No strength within my bones remained.
Dismay and terror filled my mind:
What refuge (thought I) shall we find,
When once the fierce invading band
Has poured its floods upon the land?

Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:

—But, though the fig-tree should not blow,
The vine no produce yield,
Nor fruit upon the olive grow,
Nor meat be in the field;
Flocks in the fold no more abound,
Nor cattle in the stalls be found;

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places.

Yet in the Lord I will rejoice,
And praise my God with cheerful voice.
He is my strength,—he clothes my feet
With swiftness, like the light gazelle.
He brings me to a safe retreat,
And makes me there in peace to dwell.

THE END.

PRINTED BY JOHNSTONE AND HUNTER, HIGH STREET, EDINBURGH.

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library
1 1012 01035 2088